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ROBERT R. McBURNEY

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A MEMORIAL

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ROBERT R. McBURNEY

1897

# ROBERT R. McBURNEY

A

MEMORIAL



1837-1898

Richard C. Morris

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## ROBERT R. McBURNEY

A Sketch  
*by*  
RICHARD C. MORSE

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### I. BOYHOOD AND YOUTH, 1837-1854.

Robert Ross McBurney was born March thirty-first, 1837, at Castleblayney, a small market town in County Monaghan, in the north of Ireland. His father, a popular physician with a large practice, was an active member and officer in the leading Presbyterian church of Castleblayney. Robert's mother, an ardent Methodist, was connected with a small Wesleyan chapel near their home. Both parents were devout and active Christians. Very early in his life the boy responded to the religious teaching of his mother and father. He often recalled vividly his conversion at the age of twelve years. In the light of his future life work we learn with peculiar interest that, while he regularly accompanied his parents to the Presbyterian church services and attended the Sunday-school, at another hour on each Lord's day he was to be found in the Wesleyan Sunday-school. This double attendance at Sunday-school indicated his early interest in the Bible and its teachings.

His education at school was limited to the facilities furnished in his native town. But he was not as a child fond of books, and though offered by his father the opportunity of a college course, he preferred a speedier entrance upon active life and self-support. His early familiarity with the Scriptures, however, and love for their study, and for good hymns, in which he always delighted, proved admirable ground-work for that liberal education which in later years, as he was busy with his life work, he so thoroughly wrought out for himself. As a boy, too, he showed that strong, conscientious adherence to what he conceived to be right which ever after characterized him. He fearlessly took his stand among those of his own age against indulgence in questionable amusements. On one occasion, having serious scruples about himself attending such a place of amusement when solicited to do so by one of his own relatives who had a just claim on his attention, he courteously consented to be her escort to the door but did not go further. He was faithful to his obligation as a gentleman, but true to his conviction of duty as a Christian.

His ministry to the sick and distressed also began in his boyhood. Dr. McBurney, in addition to his practice as a physician, kept open a dispensary. Robert became familiar with the various drugs and remedies, and in emergencies during his father's frequent and necessary

absences the boy was able to respond intelligently to many calls for help, and thus early learned to sympathize with and minister to the suffering. On market days the town was often the scene of disorder and drunkenness, and in caring for many a victim of drink and fighting he learned as a boy that hatred for the sin and that loving solicitude for the sinner which so strongly characterized him in his life work.

It was during his boyhood that he met with saddest bereavement in the death of his devout and loving mother. When he was seventeen years old he left his home and native country to make a beginning of business life in the great far away city of the new world.

## II. BEGINNING OF LIFE AND WORK IN NEW YORK CITY, 1854-1862.

On his arrival in New York, during the summer of 1854, he was met by one of his teachers at Castleblayney who had preceded him in coming to this country, and who, on the evening of his first day in the city, introduced him to the fellowship and to the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association, then located on the second floor of the Stuyvesant Institute, at No. 659 Broadway. He soon entered the employ of a hat manufacturer, and there learned his trade. Making choice of the church of his mother, he promptly joined the Mulberry

Street Methodist Episcopal church, since known as St. Paul's church, and began to attend the Sunday-school. He also became interested in a Wednesday night prayer meeting which was started in the Dutch Reformed church in Fulton street, and helped to put cards in store windows advertising the meeting. During the following eight years (1854-1861) he continued at his trade and in as active connection with church, Sunday-school and the Young Men's Christian Association as a very quiet and almost painfully diffident young man could be.

The New York association had been organized in 1852. During this first decade of its life, though naturally regarded by most as a doubtful experiment, it embraced in its membership a group of junior merchants and professional men who have since proved to be men of remarkable ability. No correct account of the growth of the association movement in New York city and on the American continent can be given without reckoning with the extraordinary capacity and influence of some of the men composing this group.\* The same

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\* As belonging to this group may be mentioned, among those who have died, Howard Crosby, Elbert B. Monroe, C. R. Agnew, William F. Lee, Austin Abbott, Edward Austen, Edward Colgate, Samuel Colgate, A. D. F. Randolph, S. W. Stebbins, Charles Scribner, Elliott F. Shepard, John B. Trevor, John Crerar, A. S. Barnes, Peter Carter, Harvey Fisk, Henry B. Hyde.

Among the living, William E. Dodge, Morris K. Jesup, Cephas Brainerd, James Stokes, William W. Hoppin, John Crosby Brown,

ability which has since brought them to the front in their various callings then showed itself in the formation and development of the New York association, with its novel organization, work and methods. It was also seen in their advocacy of this work in successive conventions of delegates representing the entire continent. Here they were ultimately assigned by their fellow delegates such a leadership in the supervision and extension of the organization that the form of its work, as wrought out in New York, has been substantially reproduced in the other cities of the continent. Mr. McBurney's position in this group at the beginning and for the first eight years was, as we have seen, that of a volunteer and very diffident worker.

At the end of this period he was thrown out of employment by the closing of the establishment in which he had been at work. Providentially at this time the association was without any one in charge of its rooms as caretaker or librarian, and Mr. McBurney was asked to take the position temporarily. The temporary character of the arrangement, and the condition of the association treasury are discernible in the fact that the weekly compensation agreed upon

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W. Harman Brown, D. Willis James, J. Pierpont Morgan, Veranus Morse, Timothy G. Sellew, Charles E. Whitehead, L. Bolton Bangs, John S. Bussing, Charles Lanier, John E. Parsons, John S. Kennedy, Benjamin Lord, Richard C. McCormick, A. A. Raven, John Sloane, Ralph Wells, James B. Colgate, Bowles Colgate, Jacob F. Wyckoff, Caleb B. Knerals, S. G. Goodrich.

was five dollars, and he was confronted with the information that the gas had been shut off for six months and that the rent for the same period was unpaid.

### III. FIRST TEN YEARS AS EMPLOYED OFFICER OF THE NEW YORK ASSOCIATION, 1862-1871.

His first official act on beginning his new duties, July eleventh, 1862, was to sweep out and arrange the small rooms of the association, then located in the Bible House. Soon afterward, during a holiday a young man wandered into the rooms, a stranger, as Mr. McBurney himself has been eight years before on his arrival in the city. Before that holiday closed the new officer had the joy of leading the young man to faith in Jesus Christ. It was this gracious incident that led him to resolve to devote his life to Christian work. But whether the employed officer of the association could find in that office a life work, seemed questionable in that infant period of the organization. For several succeeding years the office and officer, the organization, its members and leaders, grew together in the development of the work, and in the fuller understanding of its object and methods. Early in this period (1862-1871) Mr. McBurney was so distrustful of himself and of his qualification for the new office that he left it and the city for a short time. But soon after his return to New York he was recalled by the association. He accepted, refusing however

an increase of salary, which had been offered to him as one inducement to return.

### *1. The Parent Association Building.*

During this period the association moved into better quarters, and the conception was gradually formed of the building erected (1864-1869) on the corner of Fourth avenue and Twenty-third street—the first structure ever carefully planned and built to accommodate what has since become familiarly known as the distinctive, all-round work of the association, physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual.

Its originators and promoters had, to use the words of their leader and president, “the idea that if a building could be erected answering to a club house for young men, with everything in it calculated to exert a cheering and brotherly influence, where they could grasp a friendly hand when they came in, and where gymnasiums and music and classes for study were to be found as well as religious and Bible meetings, an influence would thus be exerted upon these young men that would hold and gradually mold them until their habits were fixed in the right direction.” The idea was a novel and attractive one. But the leaders were men of large and wise hopefulness, as well as of rare ability.

The extended work contemplated in the plan and appointments of the building called for a change in the constitution, and in seeking from

the legislature a special charter, at the suggestion of the president, the word "physical" was added to the definition of the object of the association, causing it to read, as amended: "The improvement of the spiritual, mental, social, and physical condition of young men." This was the first association constitution so altered and enlarged.

The building committee consisted of Messrs. William E. Dodge, Cephas Brainerd, J. Pierpont Morgan, Abner W. Colgate, and R. R. McBurney. All his associates on this committee survive Mr. McBurney.

The new building called for what was then deemed the enormous sum of half a million dollars. But the faith, energy, and capacity of the young men associated in this undertaking were equal to the emergency. Theirs was a faith which confidently sought to realize a broader and more comprehensive work for young men than had yet been attempted. In their planning and discussions they were not only shaping this new work and a new type of building to accommodate it, but they were also exerting a molding influence upon that one of their number who was to give the entire enthusiasm of his life and the energy of every faculty to this work. Mr. McBurney proved equal to the opportunity given him. As the responsible employed officer of the association he performed

his part in administration and organization. The officers and directors coöperated vigilantly in every department. The large building was occupied and filled with a work and workers which proved a marvelous blessing to the young men of New York not only, but of many other cities also.

Three hundred and fifty association buildings have since been erected on this continent, costing over twenty million dollars. Many have also been erected on other continents, but all the best of them are modeled after this original building. There are certainly few, if any, structures in the capital city of the new world of which this can be truthfully said. In the planning and erection of these succeeding structures Mr. McBurney was often carefully consulted by architect and association secretary. Many improvements, suggested by experience, were introduced. But the type remained unaltered. One of the latest of these buildings, embodying all of improvement that had been realized, was erected in the year just preceding his last illness under Mr. McBurney's own eye, at a cost of half a million dollars, for the West Side branch of the New York association. Building and equipment in every detail bear the evidence of his long experience, ripened by successful association administration and leadership, during the twenty-seven years' interval between the completion and dedication of these two buildings.

Such was the strong shaping influence exerted within the association movement by those who planned and wrought in this initial building. It would be equally interesting to trace the corresponding influence which the three hundred of its type have slowly exerted, during the last thirty years, upon ecclesiastical and other Christian architecture—an influence showing itself in the varied forms of church houses and in other peculiar features of institutional churches.

With the erection of the Twenty-third street building, in 1869, it may be justly said that the leadership of the Young Men's Christian Association movement passed to the New York association. The growth of the movement since then, and its extension, first in each association to the whole man, body, mind, and spirit, and then throughout the brotherhood to various classes of young men in cities and towns, in colleges and schools, in railroad and other industries, in the army and navy, and in foreign mission lands, can be traced directly to influences centering in New York, as the radiating point whence efficiency, training and development have come.

## *2. A leader in the International Organization.*

During this critical formative period (1862-1872) Mr. McBurney, joining a few prominent members of the New York association, began in 1865 his steady attendance upon the inter-

national conventions, and performed well his part as one of the convention leaders in shaping the work and mission of that representative assembly of the associations: (1) By the establishment of its executive committee in New York City; (2) by the calling of state conventions, and the formation of state organizations; (3) by the appointment of the day and week of prayer for young men in November; (4) by adopting the evangelical basis of membership, which has proved so effective in maintaining the fellowship of the churches with the associations; (5) by the suggestion and consideration in successive conventions of the various phases of this work for young men which the best experience of the best associations pointed out as of vital importance. In all this relation to the international convention and committee he acted as one of the strong group of delegates from New York, who were indispensable leaders in planning the work and accomplishing the results which have been mentioned.

### *3. Father of the State Work of New York.*

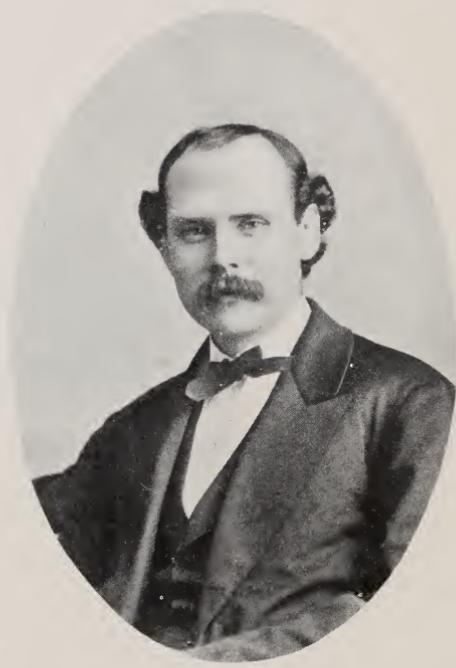
During this early period also, as corresponding member for New York state of the international committee, he became the founder and father of the New York state organization. Here, in the convention of 1867, almost single handed, he secured through patient discussion in a protracted session the adoption of the evangelical basis, which in the following year

was also adopted for the entire American brotherhood by the international convention at Detroit, and further defined and ratified by the Portland convention of 1869. Three times during the early period of the New York state convention he was chosen its president.

His vigilant care and interest were shown in the choice of an efficient state secretary and in helpful coöperation with him. On the floor of the state convention he continued to the end of his life the strongest, most experienced and influential delegate. Here, as in his many other relationships, he proved himself to be in a rare way both conservative and progressive; often slow to be convinced, yet always giving wise direction to conclusions reached and action proposed. On the other hand, he often led boldly in originating new measures and in carrying them out successfully.

Coming to the close of this eventful period of beginnings, so full of evidence, as we now see, of his qualification for the longer and larger work that lay before him, it seems to us surprising that his mind was not yet fully settled upon a life continuance in the secretaryship. But the future of the association movement, which is now understood so clearly, was then dimly discerned and vaguely appreciated. It was in the year 1869, when the new association building was approaching completion, that he expressed his serious thought of studying for the ministry,





ROBERT R. McBURNEY

1867

on the ground that in the secretaryship there was not to be found a calling and work for life. Soon he would be too old, he thought, to be attractive to young men, and his secretarial usefulness would cease. Such a conviction was held then and for years later, and is, indeed, held to-day by not a few of the strong men in the work. If the association was in its youth at this time, its executive office was in its very infancy.

Later definite offer came to him of a secretaryship in one of the leading interdenominational societies of the country, with a salary much larger than he ever received in the association work. But now the call could not divert him from the ministry to young men, which had become his settled life choice.

#### *4. Leader of the General Secretaries' Conference.*

The Young Men's Christian Associations were certainly slow in coming to the consciousness of their need of employed executive officers, and of the importance of defining their distinctive work, and of training well selected men for it. One indication of this is seen in the fact that while the societies had for nearly twenty years been meeting for helpful conference by their representatives, no meeting of their employed officers for this needful purpose occurred until the year 1871.

When these officers began to meet in that year

barely a dozen were present. No two bore the same title. The name of general secretary was adopted at the meeting, and slowly came into use in the following decade. Of the dozen men Mr. McBurney was the only one representing the fourfold all-round work for young men carried on in a large, well-appointed building specially erected for the purpose. He was also the only one who was a guide in both international and state organizations. This gave him exceptional qualification to be in these secretarial conferences both a guide and teacher of his associates. He performed this useful office for the most part very quietly and unobtrusively, working chiefly through others and putting them forward. As the younger secretaries began to be in the majority he earned and bore among them the title of Father McBurney. The number of employed officers in attendance steadily increased from year to year:—

In 1873 . . .	54	In 1879 . . .	141
In 1874 . . .	77	In 1880 . . .	178
In 1875 . . .	93	In 1881 . . .	210
In 1876 . . .	108	In 1882 . . .	255
In 1877 . . .	114	In 1883 . . .	341
In 1878 . . .	114	In 1884 . . .	388

For more than ten years this conference, in connection with the international committee's secretarial bureau of information and instruction, constituted the best agency for the discovery and training of association secretaries. The international and state secretaries coöperated to

increase its efficiency. Strong local secretaries were developed, coming into contact with what Mr. McBurney had wrought out as the pioneer among them. Clever, consecrated men were gradually secured in cities large and small. Each brought in turn his contribution to secretarial efficiency. In this annual conference they became a secretarial brotherhood in a gracious, helpful relation to one another. At the beginning, when they numbered barely a dozen, Mr. McBurney was easily first in experience and capacity to lead and teach; and at the end, when over one thousand names were on the roll, he was as easily the foremost man of the brotherhood.

In 1872 he was one of four American delegates who attended, in Amsterdam, Holland, the triennial meeting of the World's Conference of the associations. He attended every subsequent meeting save that of 1875—namely, those in 1878, 1881, 1884, 1888, 1891 and 1894. The conference of 1898 sent to his bedside in the hospital in New York a greeting full of sympathy and affection, and with assurance from delegates representing twenty-one nations that his absence was lovingly lamented.

Thus he passed the first decade (1862–1871) of his secretaryship, actively and successfully employed in a rapidly growing work by and for young men in New York city, accommodated

in a well equipped building. He was also a leader in the American international and state committees, in the secretaries' conference and institute, and was beginning to exert an influence in the counsels of the World's Conference.

IV. SECOND PERIOD OF HIS SECRETARIAL LIFE  
AND WORK, 1872-1898.

The following twenty-six years of incessant but never wearying service witnessed also an equally incessant enlargement of all his varied activity. In the New York association the work was widened in two directions—(1) by the organization of branches and the erection of branch buildings in different parts of the city; (2) by the organization of branches composed of different classes of young men, namely, students, railroad men and German speaking and French speaking young men. Each call for enlargement had an origin and history more or less peculiar to itself. To each call and its advocate Mr. McBurney gave hospitable attention. In responding to each he brought valuable contribution of counsel and suggestion. He domesticated each branch in the plan and scope of the association work.

In the midst of this period, at a reception given to Mr. McBurney in 1887, on his fiftieth birthday, Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby said: "It is an unalloyed joy to express the deep feeling of so many hearts in speaking to our beloved

friend McBurney. I am compelled to put some control over my feelings lest my language might be deemed superlative. I have watched our friend all these years of a quarter of a century during which he has been the official representative of this magnificent institution, the very centre of its influence, one of the main-springs of its life. He has identified himself with the cause of the young man in its highest expression with a sympathy and a wisdom which have been both untiring and unexcelled. He has remained himself a young man all these years. I deeply feel that our city and our whole land are indebted to our dear brother for these wonderful twenty-five years. Always in his place, always cheerful, always attending to duty seven days of every week, and often fifty-two weeks in every year; never weary of the applications pressed incessantly upon him, always multiplying friends—these have been his characteristics. I believe that such a life is the most useful of all lives—an example most precious to our young men. I know of no pastor of any church in this city whose ministry has been so useful and extended. What part of the country does not know him? And what part of the country does not know him through the goodly influence he has exerted? He is therefore a national man, quiet in his personal life and yet felt throughout the whole country, our young men everywhere recognizing him as a guide and an example."

Mr. Elbert B. Monroe, then president of the association, tendered congratulations, saying: "We do not come here with any idea that Mr. McBurney is old. We believe in him as a young man, with the young man's sympathy added to the calm judgment which can do young men good. That he has been saved to us all for this time we thank God, and pray that for many years to come he may be saved to us."

Mr. William E. Dodge, in a happy brief address, presented Mr. McBurney with a handsome velvet bag of gold eagles for the purchase of books for his library, especially for its biblical department—an eagle for each of the fifty years that were past and thirty-five more for the additional years of still more useful service to which his friends looked forward. Accompanying the gift was an envelope containing "'pinions from some eagles,'" being anonymous extracts from letters which had come from friends who had taken part in the bestowal of this gift.

#### *I. The Metropolitan Organization formed.*

In this year 1887, the multiplication of the branches of the association called for some administrative change. The board of directors and the general secretary had been responsible up to this time to administer every detail of the work in the Twenty-third street building, and also to supervise the various branches throughout

the city. The time had certainly come to release the board and its secretary from special supervision of the central building. After careful thought and study, at the suggestion and under the presidency of Mr. Elbert B. Monroe, the present metropolitan organization was formed. Mr. McBurney was thus relieved from the double service he had been rendering, as general secretary of the whole work in the city, and as secretary at the central building. He now became metropolitan secretary, holding an equal relation to every branch, over the organization and growth of each of which he had presided. And he was free during the last ten crowning years of his service to devote himself to perfecting and unifying the entire work.

## *2. Celebration of his fifty-third Birthday.*

In the year 1890, on his fifty-third birthday (March thirty-first), Mr. McBurney persuaded himself for the first and only time in his life to give a dinner to a large company of friends. He selected as his birthday guests the hundred employees of the New York City association, and as he issued the invitations was vividly reminded of the period, nearly forty years before, when he was the only employee of the association, and was receiving as small compensation as any one then on the long roll of this ramified metropolitan organization. He invited also the president and a few of the officers and directors

of the association and its branches. Fifty-eight employees were able to respond favorably, and gathered about his table at Clark's restaurant on Twenty-third street. Every class was represented, including messenger boys, cleaners, engineers, janitors, physical directors, librarians, secretaries, and assistants of all kinds.

Interesting reminiscences were given by various speakers, and the responsibilities resting upon everyone employed in the work were faithfully presented. Addresses were made by Messrs. Cleveland H. Dodge, president; Elbert B. Monroe, ex-president; Cephas Brainerd, senior member of the board of directors; William E. Dodge, chairman of the board of trustees; also by chairmen of four of the branches, by the branch secretary, librarian, and physical director longest in service; by William S. Brazier, for twenty-two years janitor of the Twenty-third street building, and by the engineer of the same building.

It would be difficult to say whether host or guests most enjoyed this delightful festivity, so full of that affectionate hospitality and good fellowship which pervaded the life of the host in all his intercourse both with his guests and with the multitude of young men he was constantly entertaining.

### *3. A Commemoration and a Retrospect in 1897.*

The following table gives a summary view of this association growth in New York city, or,

as it is now called, the borough of Manhattan. It was prepared early in 1897, for the celebration of Mr. McBurney's sixtieth birthday. At the dinner given him on this occasion Mr. William E. Dodge presided. Appropriate addresses were made by the chairman, Reverend Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, and Messrs. Cephas Brainerd, Elihu Root, and Richard C. Morse; and a portrait of Mr. McBurney, for which he had consented to sit at the request of a few friends, was presented to the association.

- 1866—April 2d, The Western Branch opened. 1872—  
The Western becomes the Bowery Branch at  
134 Bowery. 1888—The present building pur-  
chased.
- 1868—February, Harlem Branch opened. 1888—Present  
building completed.
- 1869—December 23d, Twenty-third street building com-  
pleted and opened.
- 1872—Yorkville, East 86th Street, Branch opened. 1885  
—Lot and property secured. 1896—Building in  
course of erection.
- 1875—Railroad Branch opened in Grand Central Depot.  
1879—Railroad Rooms opened at West Thirtieth  
street Depot.
- 1886—At Weehawken and New Durham.
- 1887—In Round House, West 72d Street.
- 1887—Railroad building, 361 Madison Avenue,  
opened.
- 1893—Railroad building doubled in size.
- 1891—Mott Haven rooms opened.
- 1881—German Branch organized.
- 1884—Building secured.

- 1889—Building doubled by purchase of adjoining house.
- 1896—March, Building altered and reopened.
- 1885—Young Men's Institute building completed and opened.
- 1887—Present Metropolitan Organization effected.
- 1888—Athletic Grounds and Boat House leased.
- 1889—French Branch opened.  
Student work organized as "The Student Movement." 1894—Building, 129 Lexington Avenue, purchased.
- 1891—Washington Heights Branch opened.
- 1892—Washington Heights building secured.
- 1896—West Side building completed and opened.  
When Mr. McBurney became its employed executive officer in 1862, the Association had 150 members, was occupying two small rented rooms, and expending in its work annually \$1,700. Now with 7,309 members it carries on its work at fifteen points, owns nine buildings valued at \$2,000,000, and expends annually in its diversified work \$175,000. It employs forty-one secretaries and assistants.

#### *4. Continued relation to International and State Organizations.*

While thus faithfully performing his New York secretarial work during these twenty-six years (1872–1898) he continued his active, influential relation to the international convention and its committee, as this agency also was reaching out after various classes of young men.

Though not himself a college graduate, no member of the committee was more sympathetic with the student work and its growth

throughout the country and the world. In the planting and growth of the student branch in his own city field he took the most vigilant interest, providing out of his own salary for some years the salary of the first student secretary of the New York association. In working out to a successful solution that most difficult problem of the student work, namely, its effective organization in the professional and higher schools of our great cities, what he accomplished in New York was an invaluable help to the association student brotherhood in other large cities of the continent.

Equally, as a member of the international committee, he promoted the work among railroad, colored, and other classes of young men. At the international conventions, where this ever-widening work was reported and its extension authorized, he continued an influential leader in counsel and action. In the preparation of the program of each convention his suggestions of both topics and speakers, growing out of his touch with all parts of the work in their highest efficiency, deserved and obtained prevailing influence.

When from missionaries on the foreign field urgent call came to the committee for association secretarial workers to establish the organization at strategic points on that wide field, he warmly advocated a favorable response, and served as first chairman of the sub-committee on this foreign work. The first secretary who

went to that field had received his training as an assistant of Mr. McBurney in the office of the New York association.

*5. Growing interest in the Secretaryship and in training for it.*

In the secretaries' conference and its discussions he also continued during this period his helpful leadership. He discerned clearly when the time was ripe for secretarial training beyond what could be furnished by this conference and by the secretarial bureau of the international committee, useful and necessary as both these agencies must ever continue to be. In the founding and building up of the secretarial training school at Springfield, Mass., he exerted a parental influence as counselor of its founder and first president, and, later, of his successors. As a trustee from the beginning, he was indispensable to the wise administration of the institution.

During his last sickness, while determining the provisions of his will, he expressed the desire to give one-fourth of his small estate to that department of association work which had most need of the gift. It is a striking indication of his unselfish spirit, that though the New York association, its interests and work, had always the first place in his enthusiasm and affection, he concluded after careful deliberation that secretarial training had most need of his preference in the form of a bequest; and the

fourth of his estate was willed to the school at Springfield.

#### *6. Literary and other Attainments.*

His ever-growing literary taste and attainment were shown in the gradual increase of his well-selected library. His collection of hymns—the department of poetry in which he took the greatest interest—was particularly full and interesting. The annual reports of the association, which he began to prepare in 1872, were the fruit of careful study. One of the leaders of the religious press, Dr. Edward Prime, said that they ranked among the very best presented by any of the religious societies; and he added, “No matter how excellent the speaking at the anniversary may be, I always find myself most interested in Mr. McBurney’s report.” As editor of the New York Association Bulletin and Notes he showed the same literary capacity. He was a careful, painstaking collector of association reports and literature, and for years his collection was the largest and most complete in existence. In these and other phases of his intellectual life he richly merited the honorary degree of Master of Arts conferred upon him by Hamilton College.

His love of the Bible and his passion for its study grew steadily. The time set apart each week for preparation of the Bible lesson was more and more sacredly observed. No other engagements were allowed to interfere with it.

This study of the Bible was the fundamental thing in his intellectual growth and literary culture. It determined the choice of the valuable biblical works which formed an important part of his library. It leavened his prayer life and his personal work in leading men to faith in Christ. As a teacher of the Bible to young men, his class became one of the strong factors in the religious work of the association. Young men dated from it their beginning and their growth in the Christian life. It became an object lesson to his fellow secretaries, from which they drew suggestion and inspiration.

His longest absence from his desk (February-June, 1892) was spent in a tour of the Mediterranean. Its principal feature was a month's trip through Palestine, which he keenly appreciated and enjoyed. He ever after counted it of great value to him as a reader and student of the Bible, and it gave a new interest to his teaching. His companions on the trip will always remember the zest and eagerness he was ever manifesting in all that he saw. His quick eye caught, and his memory kept count of every new variety of flower, while the scenes of sacred story, and the truths and teachings of the book he delighted to study, were indelibly impressed upon his mind.

#### *7. Personal Traits.*

He was an ardent lover of sport in the woods,

and was an expert fisherman. The Catskill mountain region, and later that of the Adirondacks, was the goal of his plans for the few brief vacations he allowed himself. His library bears witness to his taste in this direction. Side by side with the large and well-selected alcove of hymns is to be found a remarkable collection of the various editions of Izaak Walton, comprising a specimen from at least seventy editions of that "Pilgrim's Progress" of the fisherman. He belonged to a group of friends, many of them prominent in both clergy and laity, who shared with him this fondness for life and sport in the woods. One of the few recreations he allowed himself was an occasional meeting with them. But as a rule he declined the many invitations he received to join in social life apart from the association. In one instance the invitation came from one of the leading social clubs of the city. But his life was so heartily surrendered to his one work day and night that he found no room in it for favorable reply to this and to a multitude of other calls to social recreation.

The cheerfulness of his disposition and his keen enjoyment of the humorous made him very attractive to young men. He was always good company, and contributed his share of lively talk, quick repartee, apt anecdote and humorous incidents. He was fond of bric-a-brac and curios, and had a keen eye for the antique in furniture and architecture. He was

a good critic of works of art. His taste in all these lines was excellent, and his tower room and the association buildings in the erection and equipment of which he was most concerned give evidence of his capacity in these directions.

*8. At work outside the Association Brotherhood.*

While giving himself chiefly to work for young men, Mr. McBurney yielded to some of many solicitations to engage in other departments of Christian effort. As became a consistent general secretary, he was an active member of the church of his choice during his entire residence of forty years in New York, and served on its board of trustees and board of stewards. Beginning in 1867, he was one of the leading and most active members of the executive committee of the Evangelical Alliance.

He was one of the founders of the New York Christian Home for Intemperate Men, and a member of its board of directors from 1877 to 1887; and his warm interest in its work continued throughout his life. Probably no other friend of the institution during the same period directed so many unfortunate men to its care.

He was a member of the managing boards of the American Tract Society, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Federation of Churches and Christian Workers in New York City, the Clerical Mutual Association, the New York Deaconess Home and Training

School of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Manhattan Working Girls' Club.

He was a member of the Civil Service Reform Association, and rendered special service to the Charity Organization Society and the New York Sunday-School Association.

As has just been shown, he was widely valued and sought as a counselor by laymen and ministers engaged in Christian and philanthropic enterprises, and often went beyond his physical strength in making favorable response. He was conservative in discerning obstacles and warning of their presence, but also progressive in estimating with good judgment the likelihood of success in new undertakings. He was suggestive to those seeking counsel, and particularly happy in naming good candidates for the manning and leadership of worthy enterprises.

He was an enthusiastic American citizen. At the outbreak of the civil war he was exceedingly eager to enlist as a soldier, but a physical disability prevented his acceptance by the military authorities. This physical trouble was a tax upon his strength to the end of his life. Only his indomitable spirit prevented it from interfering with his incessant labors.

He also showed his good citizenship by serving faithfully as a juryman, and in his later years was greatly valued as a member of the grand jury of the city.

## *9. His Life Purpose.*

In reviewing the wide and varied range of his activities, the positions of trust he held, and his relationships to a world-wide work for young men, in which his influence was steadily and increasingly felt, it seems clear that he was a man of extraordinary ability. He possessed the capacity, talent, and arts of a statesman. He employed every faculty and talent most industriously. Like all men who discover in themselves superior capacity he was tempted to make selfish use of it. Because he successfully resisted and overcame the temptation, both his influence and usefulness in the Christian brotherhood to which he belonged steadily increased. For he continued to the end to give supreme attention to the unselfish labor of love which introduced him to his life work—the blessed work of leading young men, one by one, to faith and life in Jesus Christ. This he believed should be the controlling purpose and activity of the general secretary, and of the Christian believer. He showed this faith by his works. It was because he thus impersonated faithfully the loving, Christlike, unselfish motive of the association that he commanded increasingly confidence and coöperation in the administration of this work in New York and elsewhere.

He highly appreciated necessary machinery and appliances. But he estimated these at their right value, and never gave them first place.

His heart and hand were not enlisted and busy chiefly in organizing workers and conventions, appointing committees, constructing buildings and soliciting money. His best endeavor was given to the hand to hand, face to face work, wrought out only in personal intercourse, prayer, Bible study and teaching, and in all those quiet spiritual character-building activities which grow out of a living faith in Christ, as saviour unto the uttermost and friend beyond all others—activities which constitute the heart and life blood of the association work. His personal influence thus exerted these many years upon the lives of young men, one by one, endeared him to a great multitude of them. Some of these are now honored and useful in business, professional, political, and church life. Many more in humbler station are making their influence felt for good, and all alike value him as a friend associated with what is best in their character, their lives, and their future.

He believed that this discernment of the highest welfare of men, and the loving desire to promote it, came to him as a gift of grace from Jesus Christ, and was the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart. It had its origin, as far as he knew, in a life of prayer and study of the Scriptures, as the Word of God to him. He was an eminently devout man. Many who attended the meetings for prayer at the association rooms, where Mr. McBurney often took part, made special mention of his prayers, as

full of spiritual help and comfort. The multitude of young men and of his fellow secretaries, to whom he ministered so helpfully, unite in bearing the same testimony.

#### *10. The Last Year.*

In September, 1897, Mr. McBurney left his desk in the general office of the board of directors to take temporary charge of the Twenty-third street branch until a secretary could be found for that important post. With characteristic energy he threw himself into the work, and went so far beyond the limit of his strength that in January, for the first time in all the years of his connection with the association, he could not prepare for and attend the anniversary meeting. He withdrew with a friend to Atlantic City for rest and recuperation. Returning still an invalid, he went for treatment on February fifteenth to the Presbyterian Hospital. He continued there for five months, submitting in April to a somewhat severe surgical operation. Early in August he went to the Adirondacks, and thence on September twenty-first to Clifton Springs. But under the continued complications of his disease (multiple sarcoma), and in spite of all that the best medical skill could prescribe, he steadily grew feebler. It was graciously ordered that his last hours were free from pain. Early in the morning of his departure, with cheerful consciousness that the end was near, he said to

one of his physicians, "Almost home!" and at half-past three on the afternoon of December twenty-ninth he entered quietly and painlessly the home of eternal rest and peace prepared for him by the love of his Saviour.

V. FUNERAL SERVICE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER  
15, 1898.

Following a wish often expressed by Mr. McBurney, the funeral service was held in Association Hall, on the corner of Twenty-third street and Fourth avenue, and was of the simplest character. His pastor, Reverend George P. Eckman, Ph. D., of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal church, presided. Very appropriate portions of Scripture were read by President M. Woolsey Stryker, D. D., of Hamilton College.

Right Reverend Henry C. Potter, D. D., LL. D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal church in the diocese of New York, made the following address:—

It is in such a presence as this that we re-adjust our standards of values. There is much in all our modern life, and especially in the life of cities, to confuse them. Externalisms—the proportions and the triumphs of the visible—create even in more serious minds an undue estimate of their value and meaning; and the type of man whose achievements are expressed by bulk and bigness, whether of structures, combinations or accumulations, is the type to which there is apt to be paid the largest and the loudest homage.

It is only when one of another type—one to whom externalisms have been all along consistently indifferent, who has owned little, built little, accumulated little, if, in the material sense, anything at all—it is only when such an one is taken from his place and work in life, and we suddenly realize how much has gone out of the world in his departure, that we readjust our point of view. There have been rich men, potential men in their influences upon the street or the market—men whose presence made weaker men tremble for the interests which their cleverness and their combinations daily threatened—who have died and vanished without a sign of grief or loss from the great world that they seemed to have so mightily influenced, and often with only a sigh of relief that cleverness, adroitness, powers of forecast and combination, without any fine scruple to restrain them, have been taken out of this world.

What a different sentiment is that which gathers this various and widely representative assemblage to-day! As I look down into your faces, the gray heads dotting soberly the larger assemblage of younger heads and faces, the spectacle is profoundly significant. Some of you were the contemporaries of McBurney. Some of you have known him and worked with him during all the years of his connection with the Young Men's Christian Association. In all sorts of spiritual weather, in dark days as well as bright, in grave crises as well as in prosperous and peaceful seasons, you have wrought with him, prayed with him, known him through and through. And not only are you in no doubt about him to-day—not only have you never been in any doubt about him—but, more than this, as you stand about his coffin, as little

are you in any doubt about that supreme fact for which so steadfastly and consistently he stood—the fact of Jesus Christ, his spiritual sovereignty, and the incomparable preciousness of fellowship with him, and service for him. The air clears, the dust of human strifes and rivalries lifts and rolls away. The things seen and temporal shrink to their true and insignificant proportions; and in the presence of this noble manhood, translated now to worthier spheres and, as we rejoice to believe, to still larger opportunities, we measure by what our friend was and did the world and all that is in it at their real value.

I am not here to eulogize him. With your knowledge of him and his work, that would be superfluous, if not impertinent. He did not need interpreting. He was utterly and absolutely transparent, and the chief charm of his character, next to its singular and beautiful modesty, was its unreserved, though always kindly directness and candor. But, though he himself least of all could wish me to spend these moments in personal praise, it is our privilege—yours and mine—to recall him as he was, and to give thanks for qualities so fine and high, and, best of all, so absolutely consecrated.

In their development it is impossible not to recognize those converging forces which are a part of God's providential ordering in making men, and in fitting them for their work. Once, in his company, it came out incidentally that he was a Methodist, and I said: "McBurney, I have always credited you with being a Scotch Presbyterian. Surely 'thy speech bewrayeth thee.' Thou art a Calvinist and a Scotchman." "No," he answered smilingly, "I am neither. I am Irish by race, and by fellowship a Metho-

dist." It let in a flood of light upon characteristics in him, which are rarely combined, and still more rarely in such happy proportions. A mutual friend told me yesterday that Dr. Hodge of Princeton once looked in upon him as he was teaching a Bible class, and, after listening a few moments, said, as he came away, "McBurney is a Calvinist, though he don't know it." He had been speaking of God's great purpose for man—a purpose not to be baffled or defeated by man's waywardness or perverseness, however extreme. In that sense I hope we are all Calvinists, holding fast, amid human failures, to the divine in man, which shall at last triumph over all sin and wrong. And we can imagine McBurney talking to a company of young men, and pleading with them to own their nobler destiny, and not to fight against the constraining love of Jesus Christ. For, after all, that was the dominant spring with him, as was natural in the fellowship to which he belonged. I shall not misjudge them, I think, if I say that the dominant note in the theology of our Methodist brethren is a note of hope. And this was a preëminent note in the work and ministry of our brother departed.

I call it a ministry, and I do so advisedly, for no theory of the ministry can leave out of account the apostle's definition: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." No one who knew him can doubt that he had received the gift—the highest, and best—of the Holy Ghost; and dear Dr. Howard Crosby, when McBurney was presented on his fiftieth birthday with a purse of gold pieces, only spoke the truth when he said, "I know of no pastor of any church in this

city, whose ministry has been so useful and extended as the ministry of McBurney." How wide-reaching it was, how gentle, how courageous, how enduring in its influence! One stops to think of all the young men that have passed under his hand, and have been moved and ennobled by his touch. Where are they to-day? Scattered far and wide, all round the world, in various callings and communities, but still carrying with them, I venture to think, the impress of that affectionate interest, and wise counsel, and unwearied watchfulness, which once they experienced at his hands. What words of courage he has spoken! What lessons of loyalty, and purity, and fidelity to their divine Master he has urged upon disheartened, and lonely, and tempted ones! What new faith in themselves and in God he has awakened in them, and what hosts of young men and of older men there are to-day, who have come to believe in the fatherhood of God, because, first of all, they learned to believe in the brotherhood of Robert McBurney!

And now we are to bear him to his rest. Fitly above his breast there lies yonder wreath of orchids, with their chastened hues, so like his simple and modest manhood; and still more fitly rest there those pure white roses, like his own unstained and blameless self. True knight of God, well done! Thou goest—who of us can doubt it?—to larger tasks even as to nobler fellowships. Be ours to follow thee, as thou hast followed Christ!

The closing prayer was offered by Bishop Potter.

The interment took place later in the burial plot owned by the association in Woodlawn cem-

etary, to which the name of "Place of Rest" had been given by Mr. McBurney, through whose thoughtful efforts and solicitation it was procured. Already it had proved a place of burial for a number of young men, strangers in the city, to whom the association had ministered during their last sickness.

VI. MEMORIAL SERVICE, SUNDAY, JANUARY  
15, 1899.

A few weeks before his death Mr. McBurney recorded in his will the following wish:—

"If a service should be held at the time of my funeral in Association Hall, it is my wish that William E. Dodge preside, and that Richard C. Morse, and William W. Hoppin, and Cephas Brainard be invited to speak to young men regarding fidelity to the association and personal work for leading men to the Saviour, and I wish to have congregational singing only."

In response to the very general and urgent desire of his friends and associates such a service was held on Sunday afternoon, January fifteenth. According to the wish of Mr. McBurney, as above expressed, Mr. William E. Dodge consented to preside. A large audience assembled, representative of all classes in the community, and including many prominent citizens of New York and other cities. Prayer was offered by Reverend George Alexander, D. D.

Mr. Dodge then spoke as follows:—

This is not a funeral service to-day, with its note of loss and sadness, but a tender tribute of

loving friends to one who in life was strong and noble and pure; who did a grand work for his Master and for his fellow men; who gave himself unselfishly, even to the death, for others; who had no time to rest here, and has gone to his rest in a better world.

This room is full of friends whose lives Mr. McBurney touched, and always touched to bless and sweeten. As his life-long personal friend, it is very hard for me to express myself to-day. I feel too deeply moved by a personal loss to see with a clear vision what I would like to see, but I am sure that all our lives will be better by talking awhile of that life so full, so useful, and so wonderful. I have never known any one whose life I envied so thoroughly; he had the opportunity, which he gladly seized, of always working, day and night, for his Master, whom he loved so much, and for his brothers, for whom he had so rare a sympathy. Mr. McBurney came nearly forty years ago into this Young Men's Christian association work. It was a new work then; it had scarcely the confidence of even the churches. I think that, in a true sense, Mr. McBurney was the discoverer of the value of young men to themselves, and to the church, and to the state. He believed that they could be won by sympathy and brotherly kindness, and he believed that there was a possibility in their lives through which they could be saved, if they were only led and directed rightly in the beginning. I think there was a sort of skepticism for many years about young men, a feeling that they must run their chances, that some would certainly fall, that many would be scarred all their lives through by the temptations they met with, and that some few would come out rightly. Mr. McBurney believed in

better things for young men. He believed, as we all do, that we are all sons of God, and that every wandering lonely son could be brought back to his Father, if only rightly touched and reached by Christian sympathy and love.

I want to run over rapidly some of the phases of this wonderful life, so full of action and service. When Mr. McBurney began his work in the New York association, it was very small, and hardly known or understood in the town. It was wonderful how he touched and influenced young men, and yet, as I look back upon it, it was more wonderful how he won the confidence and esteem of the wealthy men of the city, of clergymen of all denominations and of all faiths, and of good men who loved the city and the country.

He put this association on a strong basis; he arranged its organization, which has been the guide for the organization of other associations everywhere. He, however, soon found the necessity for a building for the association. It must have a home, bright and cheerful, full of all sorts of things that would reach young men away from their homes, and help them to keep strong and clear of temptation. This building speaks to some of us very touchingly of Mr. McBurney. There is not a room or a corner of it but he designed. It was absolutely a new thing in those days. Every part of it was thought out so kindly and thoroughly that although finer buildings and grander ones have been built in other places no one of them was put up without having for its principal arrangement those plans which he devised, and which have stood the test of time.

Another thing that interested me in those early days of Mr. McBurney's wonderful work,

was the fact that he not only became interested in young men here alone in the city, but he interested himself very keenly and warmly in young men who had homes and opportunities and privileges here, and he sought and succeeded in winning their confidence, and made them feel that they had an obligation to their brothers who were less privileged than they, and he gathered about him a large class of young men of importance in the town, who had friends and relatives here, and through them he was enabled to obtain means for putting up this large building.

He then interested himself in the development of association work for young men all through the country. Of that Mr. Brainerd, who was long the chairman of the international committee, can speak better than I can. In the conferences that were held in all parts of the country and all over the world no one had so much influence as Mr. McBurney; modest, retiring, never willing to appear upon the platform, he was always, with his guiding hand, behind everything that was wise and good. I believe that the association stands so high in the world, largely though that even poise of judgment, that kindness, that influence that he, with the high qualities of a gentleman in all his intercourse with others, unselfish and wise, was able to exert.

He then became interested in young men of other classes—the railroad men, exposed as you know they are to all the dangers of long and weary trips in summer and winter, and with no place to go, when they came in from their long runs, but the saloon. He won the confidence of one who loyally and splendidly equipped the great railroad branch for the association, which

has done so much good to the city. He became interested in the student movement and in the young men of the colleges. It is a wonderful thing for those who are interested in higher education, to know how different the Christian influence and sentiment in all our great colleges and universities is to-day from what it was when that work began. Then the young men coming from their homes too often hid their light, as if ashamed to range themselves with other Christian young men. Now it is much more commonly the thing for a man to show his colors, and a man is esteemed and respected who is a manly Christian.

I could go on speaking very warmly and earnestly of the various phases of this work as it developed. It would be unjust to him and to his precious memory, though, if we left out what, after all, was the great work of his life—and that was the daily touch with young men who came to these rooms; it was every hour of every day, and every evening, summer and winter, Sundays and week days.

To those of you who are not acquainted with the movement of young men it would be a surprise to know what a clearing house for young men New York is. They come here from every part of the world, of every nationality. Soon they began to find out that there was a home feeling in this association, and that they could meet a friend here. He had a sort of magic touch. I cannot understand it. It was very kindly, brotherly, friendly; it was not inquisitive; but he won the confidence of these young men at once, and they told him all about themselves. He was a sort of father confessor to them. He told them how to withstand temptation. Many of those who are settled in

New York can tell you how much influence he had on their lives; and I suppose there is hardly a place in the world where English-speaking people are found, where there is not one or more young men whose lives have been changed by their intercourse with Mr. McBurney. It was a wonderful power; there was such continuity about it; it had a direct effect which always astonished those who knew him best. And then he was so unconscious of it, never speaking of his work to others unless he had an opportunity to recommend some young man to a place for which he was fitted. We have not now, and never will have, any exact record of what a powerful influence for good he was in this direction.

But I am speaking too much of Mr. McBurney. There ought to be a song of triumph to-day from all his brothers. Having no near relatives in New York, and no home here, he lived in the association and for it; he took no rest, but constantly was following his Master's voice. He became an adviser and counselor and friend of people of all kinds of religions; Catholic priests, Jewish rabbis, clergymen of different faiths, were wont to come here and consult him; men of large means, who wanted to make their wills, and who wanted to know how best to use the money that God had given to them, asked and acted on his advice.

This meeting has a tender and pathetic interest from the fact that it was arranged by Mr. McBurney himself. It would have been very easy for us to have gathered great men from all parts of the country. They would gladly have come to show honor to him; but with a clear eye, knowing that his end was very near, quietly and calmly waiting for the coming of

his Master, he said that he wanted no funeral service. He merely wanted to have a few friends, whose names he gave, and who will speak here to-day, talk to the young men of the association and the older men who have graduated from it and give to them his last message.

Mr. McBurney left little money; almost every dollar he gave away as it came. He had no time in this busy age to make money. He was living for better and higher things, but he left as his last will and testament this injunction to us, "that we should be loyal to the association, and that we should gladly continue in the personal work of winning souls to Christ"; loyal to the work he loved, personal work for the Saviour, for whom he lived and died. That is his bequest to us. We are his executors and trustees.

In that beautiful address made by Bishop Potter at Mr. McBurney's funeral service a few days ago, he told us, as some of you remember, that this death led us to "readjust our standard of values." How little do glory and money and worldly successes count, as contrasted with such a life as that of our dear friend! He believed with all his heart that every Christian man, clergyman and layman, had just such opportunities, and that if they all would only awake to their opportunities and chances of work for Christ, this world would soon begin to gladden and brighten for the coming of the Lord.

I hope we shall all take away with us the memory of this good and beautiful life, and take away more than that, the impulse to follow him as he followed Christ.

Mr. William W. Hoppin was then introduced by the chairman as a warm friend of Mr.

McBurney and for a long time president of the association. He spoke as follows :—

I would feel indeed unable to speak on an occasion of this kind if I supposed that any of you had come to hear me. The thought that is in your hearts and in my heart is that we are all here because we loved Robert McBurney. Izaak Walton said that a companion who was cheerful was golden, and I think he would have enjoyed the companionship of Robert McBurney. He was a man—cordial, cheerful, hopeful, everything that makes a man attractive for young and old in this life struggle. His cheerfulness did not come from that inactive good nature which we see sometimes in men who have not the desire to fight the battle of life and who have not the courage of their convictions. His cheerfulness was born of love; his influence came not in the wedge shape which thrusts itself in and rends asunder, but it was more like the sunshine, which all feel who come near it. He was a tactful man; and when we say tactful we do not mean that element in a man which leads him to seek the favor of others obsequiously for his own good. He was tactful because he had no self-love.

I think he was the most self-forgetful man that I ever met. It was at the basis of everything that he did. I suppose that some here remember the days when the executive committee met in the room over there at five o'clock in the afternoon, and when, after a weary day of work and with a feeling that we ought not to be called upon to do anything more that day but should be allowed to go home, we entered the room to find McBurney always there and always full of good things that he wished to

have considered. And so the half-hours would go, and the hours would go, and though we would be restless to get away—how well I can remember it—he never thought about hours for eating and sleeping or anything else that concerned his personal comfort so long as the association work claimed him. Sometimes he would rise, when we were getting restless and moving towards the door, and with that peculiarly interested look in his face that held everyone he would say, “Do not go, please; stay just one moment.” And then he would develop some plan which would lead us to forget dinner and other things—something that he had been thinking about and wanted acted upon because he knew it was of vital importance. I have not had the privilege of being associated with him now for many years in the active work of the association. Yet whenever recently I have met him I have felt strengthened and helped. If it was only for a moment on the street, as I was passing down to my business, he always stopped and had a word about the work.

I am not going to ask you to listen to me while I speak in detail of his work. I am here simply because I loved him, and want to say what I think he would like to have me say, and it is this—that, if in this work you young men are to make your mark and help your fellow men, you must be absolutely without self-love. I do not mean merely that you should practice self-denial; that is good, but self-forgetfulness is better—counting one’s self as nothing, and Christ as everything. That was the secret of McBurney’s power—the spontaneity of the man. Perfunctory?—he could not be perfunctory. In everything he did you felt that there was a great moving power within him. The members of

the boys' club, who came to him with some little matter, he was immediately in touch with and knew their wants, and entered into full sympathy with them. He loved Christ more than he loved any other person or thing, and it was no self-denial for him to work. He was not thinking of what place he was to occupy, and what effect it was to have on him, but of his work for the Master. He was human, he had his limitations; but his life overstepped the limitations. He was not institutionalized; but if I may use the phrase, he McBurneyized the institution—nay, he was the power inside that moved and widened the association work. Why, I remember my first visit to the rooms, years ago, in the absence of McBurney. There did not seem to be anything to them. The secretary did not know what it was to be a secretary. His was a sort of perfunctory duty of keeping rooms open and pamphlets on hand. But McBurney found out what young men needed. Under him the work of the institution developed, and men began to realize that young men were to be taken care of, and men of wealth and power, who had not thought of these things, came forward to give to McBurney all the support and all the help that he needed.

Young men! let me ask you one thing. In this crowded, restless city, do you think you are doing Christ's work? Are you doing it in a perfunctory way? Are you attending your committee meetings, and church meetings, and going to the association on a sort of debit and credit account system, because you owe a little on this side of the account, and a little to the world? Are you thinking only of self-advancement? Because, if you are, you cannot do McBurney's work, and the work he wanted the

association to do. You cannot be as useful as he was unless you can get as close to the Master as he did, and as far outside of yourself as he did; but, if you do, you will then realize what power and love for the work will develop.

Mr. Richard C. Morse, general secretary of the international committee, and for thirty years associated with Mr. McBurney in work for young men, was introduced, and spoke as follows:—

Mr. McBurney was a man of right choices. When he came to this city, a friendless young man, on the evening of his arrival he sought the rooms of the association, then obscure and small but hospitable. He made a right choice that first day—a choice of right companionship, and soon he was in the church and in the Sunday-school. Eight years passed away, during which he made a beginning of business life in the great city. Then, being temporarily out of employment, he was asked to take temporary charge of the association rooms. He consented to this. And the first holiday that occurred he spent in those rooms, little dreaming that he would, in a similar way, spend every future holiday of his life in the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association. For on that day a stranger young man, friendless as he had been when he arrived in the city, came into the rooms, and during the day Mr. McBurney led him to faith and trust in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. In telling me the story years afterward, he added, "That settled my choice of Christian work as a life work." He did not then intelligently choose what we now call the work of a general secretary, for there was then little idea of what that office and its work was. In that

infant period of the association its present methods, agencies, and permanent mission were not defined. But later, when this building was in process of construction, he told me one day that he was thinking of eventually studying for the gospel ministry, as his goal in Christian work. A few friends had counseled him to do this. I expressed great surprise, for I had been deeply impressed, as were many others, with his rare qualification for the work in which he was then engaged. But he said, "Very soon I will be old; too old for the secretaryship; too old to help young men, and they will want to get rid of me." That critical deliberation ended in a third right choice. This building was completed, and the fuller outline of the work, then new and strange in the land and in the church, came clearly and well defined before his vision, and he devoted himself to it with a life enthusiasm that never faltered.

At the time this building was dedicated, in December, 1869, it was my privilege—a very great privilege—to have our pathways in life and work unite. It had been owing to his influence that, some years before, I had become connected with the New York association, and now it was owing to his suggestion and influence that I became an employed officer of the international committee. A desk was assigned me in the office of the committee, which had been located near his own office in the new building. Later, we occupied rooms in the tower of the building for ten years. He little dreamed what he was doing in those first thirteen years in this building. In December, 1869, when it was opened and dedicated, it was the only structure of its kind in the world—the only one that had been built to accommodate what we are now

familiar with as the fourfold work of the association: physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual. Some parts of this work were then a new experiment. Some of the leaders were doubtful how long they could keep together as a unit all the varied work attempted in this building. The distinctive and invaluable service which Mr. McBurney rendered the association consisted in his outlining and illustrating the nature, qualifications, and work of its executive employed officer. He was giving his life to this varied work for young men in Christ's name. It was a complicated and difficult task, requiring a man of rare ability and great endowment. Mr. McBurney, in those thirteen years, met in an exemplary way this exacting requirement.

As American citizens we deem it to have been of vast benefit to the country that when, in the infancy of the republic, its first chief executive was to be chosen, a man was elected to the presidency who was as much greater than the office as "The Father of his Country" is greater than any office in the gift of that country. And in that critical period of our history, when there was also needed a first secretary of the treasury—the bankrupt treasury of the republic—was it not a vast and providential benefit that Alexander Hamilton was greater than the office which he undertook to define and administer? Because of their extraordinary qualifications these two great men so administered their trust as to influence and shape the administration of the presidency and the treasury for all time to the vast advantage of the nation. Equally happy was it for the brotherhood of the Young Men's Christian Association that its first general secretary, who was called upon to define the nature, qualifications, and duties of the office, was a

man so much greater than the office that he gave to it at the very outset a character and usefulness which otherwise could not have been realized.

He attended faithfully the annual meetings of the American general secretaries, beginning with the first in 1871, when barely a dozen were present, who constituted the great majority of such officers then employed by the associations. For more than ten years, while the number of secretaries increased from a dozen to several hundred, this was the best existing institute for training these officers. In these formative years he was leader, guide, instructor, exemplar. And then when the time was ripe he exerted all his influence to help in founding the first secretarial training school, and was for years its chief counselor and trustee.

He, however, was not then intent upon or conscious of doing this work for the country and the world. He was doing his work for those young men that were coming into this building day after day, and year after year, whom he was leading to faith and life in Jesus Christ. He was doing it out of that unselfish love for men which Jesus Christ planted in his heart, and because this love dominated his life. But none the less he was doing an invaluable work for the whole brotherhood in this land and in other lands. Men came from all parts of the country into this building. If I have seen one man stand on the corner of Fourth avenue and Twenty-third street and put his valise down on the ground that he might enjoy the sight of this building, I have seen hundreds, and they would come to the door and read the name over it, and on their faces came a look of surprise, that the Young Men's Christian Association should

possess such a building. Many of these men entered and examined the building, and before that decade was over quite a number of buildings on this model had been erected by the associations in different cities. Mr. McBurney, when he prepared the annual reports that he read from this desk year after year, as the older ones among you will remember, often gave particular account, not only of the progress of the New York city association, but also of the progress of the work in the state and throughout the continent and the world.

To the New York state conventions he went steadily. He was the father and founder of this state organization and work. To every international convention save one, beginning with 1865, he went with equal fidelity. To him a convention was a thing of life. Of this life he felt himself to be a part. He seemed to feel the pulse-beat of it during all the sessions and to be sensitive to everything that was vitally related to the work of the convention and to its best interests and usefulness. He brought to the floor the expert knowledge of a local secretary, which he, above all men in the country during those early formative years, was acquiring in this building. How often during that period, after a weary visit to fields of association work that were full of discouragement, have I come up those stairs and passed into the reception room to meet his cheerful greeting, and to look about me and to feel that the heart of the work was sound and healthy, and that the strong pulse that was beating here would send the life-blood through the whole brotherhood! All this was due to his efficient day and night service year in and year out.

He attended every World's Conference save

one in the capitals of Europe between 1872 and 1894; and last summer, when we met at Basle—delegates from twenty-three nations, speaking fifteen languages—the only cablegram of greeting sent by that latest World's Conference was addressed to Robert McBurney at the Presbyterian Hospital in this city, telling him of the sympathy of the whole world brotherhood, and of how keenly all mourned the loss of his invaluable counsel and coöperation.

Now the same retiring modesty that he was ever manifesting here, visible to you all, he manifested in these larger public meetings. He did not seek the platform. Again and again he was sought as president of our American international convention; once he was elected, but declined to serve. He rejoiced in doing the unseen work in a quiet, unnoticed way. At that great jubilee convention, the World's Conference in London in 1894—the last which he attended—he was chairman of its chief executive committee, consisting of members from the various countries represented. He had opportunity for hearing very little that was said on the floor in Exeter Hall, so he told me, because in that committee there was indispensable quiet work to be done—a quiet work of conciliation, on which rested the unity of the movement, a work that could only be accomplished by prayer and the wisest and most loving endeavor. There was a sad lack of unity in the committee when it was first appointed and called together. It was not until just before the last session of the conference that the triumph of peace and unity was gained in prayer led by the chairman, Robert McBurney. In the report of that conference—a very interesting report, filling an octavo volume—you will find much wise and

eloquent discourse; but you will search in vain for any mention of the fact that I have stated to you, and yet on that quiet work of conciliation hinged very much of what was accomplished in that memorable assembly. He was able to render this important and critical service for the World's Conference of 1894 because already in many American conventions, especially during the formative period of the association movement, he had again and again rendered the same invaluable, unrecorded service.

All the wide and varied service of this busy life was wrought, as we now see, not only for the young men he was meeting in this city, but for the young men of the nation, of the continent, and of the world. He was successful in it all, not merely because he was a man of remarkable ability and talent, but because he was a man of rare consecration and of rare endowment by the Spirit of God with that unselfish love which the Apostle Paul struggles to put into words in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. As I read and ponder those words I shall ever think of Robert McBurney, and how, in the close companionship of many blessed years of personal friendship, he carried home to my conscience, my heart and my life the meaning of that matchless portion of the Word of God.

Well, he is gone from us—so we say, because these bodily eyes do not see him. But I believe that he is here with us and solicitous as ever for this work, that it should be kept close to its divine purpose, always animated by the spirit as well as bearing the name of Jesus Christ. And as I think of him as he appeared on this platform year after year to report the work of the association it will always be pleasant to recall

two verses of a hymn which I remember he discovered in the hymn book one day when we were working over the annual report. With a light in his countenance, and joy in his voice, he exclaimed, "We must put these verses at the end of the report this year!" You will find them at the close of his report for 1873. They express the aspiration of his life, which he wants us all to share with him:—

" We who so tenderly were sought,  
 Shall we not joyful seekers be,  
 And to Thy feet divinely brought,  
 Help weaker souls, O Lord, to Thee?

" Celestial Seeker, send us forth!  
 Almighty Lover, teach us love!  
 When shall we yearn to help our earth  
 As yearned the Holy One above?"

The chairman introduced Mr. A. H. De-Haven, who, on behalf of the trustees of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal church, presented the following memorial and resolutions:—

Minute adopted by the board of trustees of the St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal church at a special meeting held January eighth, 1899:—

In the removal of Robert R. McBurney, who departed this life December twenty-seventh, 1898, the officiary and membership of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal church, New York, sustain a loss of unusual gravity.

Uniting with the church in August, 1854, and remaining in its fellowship until his death, he was prominently identified with its continuous life for more than forty years.

Occupied with the service of the institution for the success of which he gave his life, omitting no detail in the discharge of his obligations to that organization, he yet found opportunity to devote himself with singular earnestness to the interests of the church with which he

was connected. Without a trace of narrowness in his composition, quick to discover and ready to acknowledge the good in every form of religious activity, rising above all mere sectarian and partisan considerations, convinced that the service of Christ transcends loyalty to a human creed, he nevertheless clung with sterling fidelity to the doctrine and polity of that body of Christians with which he associated himself early in life. Such was the confidence reposed in his wisdom by his brethren that for many years he was an honored member of the board of trustees and of the board of stewards of St. Paul's church. In official position he bore himself with exceeding discretion and dignity. He was the comrade and counselor of his pastor, the judicious but humble monitor of his fellow laborers, the chivalric Christian gentleman at all times and everywhere. His loving forbearance, his untiring patience, his exhaustless charity, made him an inspiring personality to all who met him.

Generous beyond his means, it was his fortune to scatter in God's name, and not to husband in his own. Persistent against all discouragements in prosecuting his providential task, he saw the noble fruitage of his toil in the salvation of many souls. "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord" by him.

His distinguished services in behalf of young men have ineffaceably written his eulogy in the character of those whom he helped to a better life; the record of his achievements will constitute an important chapter in the history of Christian progress in the latter half of the nineteenth century in America; the memory of his gracious fellowship, his helpful ministry, his heroic consecration, will abide forever in the hearts of those who were privileged to be his companions.

Having departed to that better country whither his feet were ever tending, and whence he will not return, we record our profound sense of personal loss, our sincere sympathy for the great organization so sorely bereft,

and our hearty thanksgiving to God for the abundant life and the triumphant faith of our translated brother.

(Signed) E. M. F. MILLER,  
Secretary.

The Honorable Elihu Root was then introduced, and on behalf of the trustees and directors of the New York association, presented the following memorial and resolution:—

Robert R. McBurney died on Tuesday, the twenty-seventh of December, 1898, at the age of sixty-one years,

In the death of Mr. McBurney the association, the community the Christian world, mankind, have lost a friend, and a life of rare usefulness has closed. He has left an impression upon the manhood of his day and generation which has been permitted to few men. For thirty and six years he has been the general secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association of New York City, being the first to occupy that position. Having been identified with the association from its early days to its present, from the time when its life seemed flickering in uncertainty until the time when its influence has become recognized and welcomed throughout Christendom, he has exercised a powerful formative influence upon this work, not only in America, but throughout Europe and the world. Modest, untiring, wise and unselfish, a man of refined and cultured tastes, and of attractive personality, he was the adviser, the friend, and the helper of young men.

The work of the Young Men's Christian Association was an almost untried experiment when he became identified with it, and he lived to see it a great power in the land. He was so genuine and brotherly in his personal contact with young men of all classes, that he won their confidence, cheered and counseled them in loneliness and temptation, and fortified them until they learned to battle for themselves. Night and day, without sparing

himself, he patiently and gladly continued this quiet, unobserved work, to be evident only in the consecrated lives of those he influenced. His sympathies were broadened by his faith, and were limited to no one field of human service. Men of all creeds came to him for advice and help, and in all Christian charities and social reforms his experience, his mature knowledge of men, and his sagacity in the affairs of life, gave rare value to his counsels. His life consisted of a constant and generous giving out of himself for others, until calmly and with faith awaiting the summons, he died, not full of years, but his years filled with noble effort and grand results, his thoughts to the last intent upon the work he was leaving and the friends he loved. We recognize the goodness of God in giving us for so many years the work of this devoted man. His memory is a benediction and an inspiration.

*Resolved*, That a committee of eight, consisting of the presiding officer of this meeting as chairman, and seven others to be named by him, be hereby appointed, who shall take whatever steps their judgment prompts to provide a fitting memorial of the life and services of this friend of young men, and of his unparalleled work in their behalf.

Mr. Root then spoke as follows:—

I offer this resolution, Mr. Chairman, not simply because I have been asked to offer it by the trustees of the association who caused it to be prepared, but with a hearty and genuine sympathy in the words and the purpose of the resolution, which recalls a permanent friendship of nearly thirty-four years; with the very deepest affection and gratitude for helpful kindness in my early life; and with admiration for Mr. McBurney's character and his preëminent qualities as a man and for the great things he has done. Gratitude and affection have followed him during all the course of his days, but now

that he is gone and we can look back upon his life we only begin to realize how great he was. When we remember how prejudice, bitterness and cruelty have divided mankind in all the years of theological strife, we may realize how great was the nature that brought together in the pursuit of a common end men of all denominations. How great a nature was this that attracted all and repelled none! He was simple, direct, truthful; and yet he was skillful, adroit, carefully weighing and following the wisest course to attain the end.

I think the secret of his wonderful success lay in the quality of sympathy with the best in every man's nature. It made no difference what the man was—what his associations, his training, his beliefs, his purposes—the best there was in him Robert McBurney found with the unerring sympathy of his wonderful spirit. His life was a thing above all dogmas; and with his unselfishness, his freedom from cant, the intensity of his belief and the wonderful persistence of his purpose, he accomplished a work the like of which has never been seen in the days of our modern civilization among all the people of Christian religions. I believe that while we have parted with him as a friend—as the kindly, gentle companion, with his attractive manner and sweet temper—as he recedes into the past and men look back at him he will be seen to be a greater man, of a greater nature and of a greater worth, than many among those of his day who have filled great places in church and state, have founded great fortunes, builded great material works, and have been highly esteemed by mankind.

Cephas Brainerd was introduced, and spoke as follows:—

I have one reason which I deem unanswerable for taking part in this service, and that is, Mr. McBurney in his will named those whom he wished to have invited to speak if such a meeting as this were held. He also indicated clearly the general topics which he thought might be treated.

An intimate acquaintance with Mr. McBurney, commencing in 1862 and continued to the end of his life, the affection which existed between us, my own sense of personal loss as well as my sense of the loss which the association cause in New York and in the wide world has suffered in his death, the consciousness of the loss which many good enterprises have suffered in this visitation, would together, in their influence upon me personally, have prevented any active participation in the scenes of this day. I shall not, therefore, in anything I may say, refer to the circumstances which make the visitation which calls us together so completely afflictive.

When I met Mr. McBurney, and for some time thereafter, the predominating quality which he exhibited was that of diffidence. True, he was kindly, genial and pleasing; but he was extremely modest and retiring. Indeed, I believe he had never spoken in any meeting public in its character. It was probably true, as was often said, that he was willing to take part in the devotional services of his own church because it was there the custom for all persons to kneel during prayer, and so he could be heard practically from a place of concealment, being hidden by the backs of the benches.

At that early date he exhibited none of those larger qualities which afterwards distinguished him. He was then neither a reader nor a student, and his familiarity with affairs, such as

it was, seemed to have come solely from a good knowledge of the moderate business in which he had been engaged as a clerk. He withdrew from school and came here early in life, not wholly in accordance with the advice or wishes of his parents. His father was a Christian man, a competent and popular physician, and his mother a devoted and exemplary woman, filling admirably her position. He could not have received any considerable financial assistance from home.

All present this afternoon know what Mr. McBurney was at the close of his extremely useful life. From the time of my first acquaintance with him he rapidly advanced, taking no step backward to the end; and the resolutions which have been submitted, while wholly true, inadequately describe his career. No man I have ever known grew more steadily or in a more shapely way than Mr. McBurney. In the largest sense of the words he was a thoroughly self-made man.

I can best fill out, while saying something about him, the idea which I think was in his mind when he gave the directions for this service, by noting some of the elements which contributed to his continuous growth.

He had a wonderful faculty for the acquisition of knowledge; all was fish that came to his net. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, whomsoever he was with, this wonderful acquisitive faculty was in constant operation. The newspapers, the companions in the cars, the visitors at his room and at his office, the talks that he heard, the sermons that he listened to, the books that he read, and the books that others read to him, were all his helpers. What he read, and heard, and saw, his strong memory

retained and the quickness of his faculties enabled him to employ as occasion might require, so that, as you all know, he became a wise instructor, a judicious adviser, a thorough executive officer, an educated man.

When he began his career in the association, there was in its management and upon its committees a group of extremely able, wise, and public-spirited men. Its affairs, the principles upon which it was founded, the work which it could consistently undertake in furtherance of those principles, were thoroughly and carefully discussed by these men. Within three years after he became connected officially with the association, the enterprise was begun which resulted in the building we now occupy. It was for such an institution an unexampled undertaking. The obtaining of the money necessary to erect it involved a great deal of consideration, much solicitation, and many efforts to secure public attention to it; with all these Mr. McBurney became very familiar, and in them he had his appropriate part. He was constant in his attention to the work of constructing and fitting up this building, which seems even now pervaded by his benignant presence. During all this long period and long after, men such as I have mentioned continued their connection with the undertaking. Happily, many of them are now living and in active service—some are present, and I do not mention their names—as types, however, I may mention two or three who have departed, Cornelius R. Agnew, Elbert B. Monroe, and William F. Lee of New York city, and in the larger work for young men in the United States and the British Provinces and in Europe, men like John S. Maclean of Halifax, H. Thane Miller of Cincinnati, and William Edwyn Shipton

of London. I may say this, that others whom I have not mentioned were not inferior to those I have named. What a school he attended in those earlier days. The educational power of these long discussions of principles, of methods, of ways and means, the interviews with gentlemen whom it was hoped might be interested, can hardly be overestimated. Few men ever attended so complete an institution for instruction in the qualities and powers which Mr. McBurney thereafter exhibited in such effective fullness.

Added to this, he grew steadily and rapidly to be a large and general reader. He was not systematic in this. Indeed he would be called a miscellaneous reader—novels, travels, history, polemics, poetry, and especially hymns. Nor did he neglect either religious or secular newspapers. Not only did he read consecutively, but he also read by scraps. He could save a few minutes wherever he might tarry by reading the book which was just at his hand, and in all he was attentive to what he was doing. His thought and his retentive faculty were alive. Especially did he read carefully in respect of his various journeys in Europe and in the Holy Land. He was fully equipped in this regard to make his travels useful to himself and also contributors to his general stock of available knowledge.

Finally, and as most important, was his thorough and continued and prayerful study of the Bible. Those who attended his Bible class know how well he was prepared to meet them. He did not confine his study to what I may call the stock or common expositions of the Scriptures. He compared Scripture with Scripture, he compared the orthodox view with the view of the

extremist on the one side or the other; and a part of his study was the geography of the country, the times in which the Scriptures were written, and the people and things which pertained to those times, the modes of thought, the habits and customs as disclosed by modern research; so that in fact few men, even in the clerical profession, were so completely in possession of adequate knowledge for personal profit or for the instruction of others as was Mr. McBurney. In this study he was brought in contact with the best thought, with the best language, and the highest purposes of the times, and so he became broad and wise, as he was devoted, devout and earnest. True, he accepted the Scriptures as the Word of God, but with no blind or unchallenging faith, for all assaults upon that Word he tested and weighed, but the result was still unshaken faith, unwavering confidence, and unyielding trust. In all, through all, and over all, was his personal faith and personal love for God, for his Son, and his personal faith and belief in the power, the pervasive and constant presence of the Holy Spirit. He believed in prayer and in answer to prayer, and he knew whereof he believed. He was constant from the beginning to the end to the purpose and aim of his life, the advancement of the cause of Christ among young men.

Now, to realize, if I may, the wishes of Mr. McBurney in regard to this service, let me say that I have disclosed nothing in these observations to dishearten any young man, or any older man, but much that ought to encourage every one, because, in respect of these things, all start practically from the same level. There was nothing in his career, nothing in his success, nothing in the affection with which he was

regarded, nothing in the sense of loss which we feel, but what may be the part and share of us all. True, his was an illustrious career. At the end he stood, by the universal acknowledgment of his associates in the secretaryship the world over, their chief. True he had wrought great things, true he carried heavy burdens, experienced great trials, overcame great difficulties and obstacles, had warm and earnest contention, but at sixty-one, after more than thirty-six years of service in the public eye in this mighty city, he died without an enemy, with friends without number here in our own country and in every other land where the name of these associations is known. As years increased his cares and burdens multiplied; social life, in its best sense, attracted him; great philanthropic interests—which had for him infinite charm—solicited his attention; business, which he tried for a short time after becoming secretary, called him; but at all times this institution of his early love had his first and best thought, his untiring effort, and his unabated affection. To this association, in all the multiplying forms of its work, he was faithful unto death.

Calmly, with love for all, with no sadness of farewell to those who were dear to him, with hope that was bright for the future, with faith that did not falter, he said “good-by” for a little time, with his face set, as was the face of Mr. Standfast, toward the celestial gate; looking to the meeting with those loved ones who had gone before, believing in the meeting by and by with those he was leaving behind him, sure of the welcome ‘‘Well done.’’ Now he—

“ . . . wears the crown  
Of full and everlasting  
And passionless renown.”

The resolution presented by Mr. Root was unanimously adopted.

In closing the service Mr. Dodge said:—

I trust we have not done to-day what our dear friend McBurney would have wished undone. He was so modest; he desired that there might be nothing said about him publicly and no meeting held; and when he was told that there would certainly be a memorial service, all he wanted was that such a meeting should be a new inspiration of loyalty to this work and to the personal work of winning souls to Christ. We could have no better inspiration to such loyalty and such work than the story of the life which has been an object lesson to us all.

There was not a bit of selfishness in his nature; but I can imagine that if he ever had a selfish wish it was that if he went into the heavenly home he should not go alone. All of us, I believe, hope that we are going to that heavenly home. Shall we go alone, or shall we find those waiting for us and following us whom we have led to the Father's house?

#### VII. THE MEMORIAL.

Mr. Dodge, according to the terms of the resolution adopted at the memorial meeting, subsequently appointed the memorial committee.

After careful deliberation this committee issued the following decision concerning the proposed memorial:—

During the last years of his life Mr. McBurney was absorbingly occupied in promoting the erection and equipment of the association building of the West Side branch. In itself an embodiment of all that was wisest and best in the work for young men which he had been accomplishing during the many years of his active connection with the association, this building, with its admirable equipment, stands as the most fitting memorial of his life work. His deepest solicitude at the time he was taken ill related to removing the floating indebtedness on the building, then amounting to \$77,500.

A beautiful lot in Woodlawn cemetery was procured for the association through Mr. McBurney's efforts, and was part of the blessed ministry to young men in which he spent his life. Here have been already interred several young men for whom, as strangers, the association cared in their last sickness; and here Mr. McBurney desired to be buried. No monument has yet been erected on this spot.

The committee believe that the most fitting memorial of Mr. McBurney that his friends and associates could provide would consist of—

First. The complete removal of the floating indebtedness upon the West Side association building, amounting to \$77,500.

Second. The placing in a prominent place in that building of a memorial tablet bearing the name of Mr. McBurney and a simple inscription concerning his relation to that building and to the work of the association for which it stands.

Third. The erection upon the association lot in Woodlawn of a simple and appropriate monument bearing his name.

Fourth. The preparation of a memorial volume.

The committee have accordingly decided upon securing the sum of \$81,000, which careful estimate shows

will be required for the accomplishment of the fourfold memorial which has been described.

WILLIAM E. DODGE, *Chairman*;  
CEPHAS BRAINERD,  
MORRIS K. JESUP,  
M. TAYLOR PYNE,  
JAMES STOKES,  
SAMUEL THORNE,  
CORNELIUS VANDERBILT,  
RICHARD C. MORSE, *Secretary*.

April 29, 1899.

The sum of money required to complete the proposed memorial was happily secured, and as one part of it the present volume has been prepared for publication.

## CABLE MESSAGES, LETTERS, AND OTHER TESTI- MONIES

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The following cablegrams were received as soon as the intelligence of the death of Mr. McBurney reached association friends in Europe:

From Sir George Williams, president and founder of the London association:

December 30, 1898.

"British Young Men's Christian Associations send heartfelt sympathy. Our loss McBurney's gain."

From Messrs. W. H. Mills, secretary of the English National Council, and J. H. Putterill, secretary of the London association:

December 29, 1898.

"Deepest sympathy from English National Council and London Central association."

From Mr. E. Buscarlet, president of the Paris association:

December 29, 1898.

"Deeply mourning the loss of McBurney, Paris sends greeting and sympathy to the New York association."

From Mr. E. Sautter, secretary of the French National Committee:

December 29, 1898.

"Deeply impressed with the loss of McBurney. Weeping with you."

From Professor Edouard Barde and Mr. Charles Fermaud, chairman and secretary of the Committee of the World's Conference, located at Geneva, Switzerland:

December 30, 1898.

"Deepest sympathy. Revelation xiv:13. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

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From Lord Kinnaird, vice president of the English National Council:

"The Young Men's Christian Associations of America and indeed of the whole world have suffered a tremendous loss in the death of Mr. McBurney. We on this side join with you in sorrowing that our work has lost such a stimulus and our young men such a friend. He was certainly a wonderful man and will be terribly missed."

The secretary of the London association writes:

"Much as the American brethren loved and respected him, their affection and admiration could not exceed that felt towards him by the many brother secretaries and others with whom he was intimately acquainted in this country."

The Editor of *The Guide*, Glasgow, Scotland, writes:

"Twenty years ago, I gave a letter of introduction to two young men on their way to Philadelphia via New

York. Not long after their arrival they wrote in warm words of thanks of their cordial reception by Mr. McBurney. He talked and had prayer with them. But after they had left his room he ran after them to ask if they had need of money. They were deeply touched by his loving regard. This is only a typical example of the reception which thousands of young men have received during all the years of his service."

From a young banker in one of the capitals of Europe, who spent the early years of his business life in New York:

"Often of late years have I thought of my good friend in New York, Mr. McBurney, who in the dizziness of my first steps in New York, took me by the hand and cared for me like a father for his boy. What sweet memories of pleasant hours spent with him, when he would kindly take the trouble to chat with my broken English. We used to go together to some very plain restaurant and partake of a simple meal. And I am only one of thousands of young men who have shared in this same goodness of his wide-open heart!"

From the secretary of the Stockholm association:

"His last letter to me from the sanitarium, a little while before his death, I will keep as a precious remembrance of this dear friend to whom I owe so much for his personal kindness and for the valuable instruction in association work which he gave me during my never to be forgotten stay in your hospitable country. He did a great work and we have suffered a great loss."

From a missionary in Brazil:

"For three years my desk in the office of the New York association was nearest to his own. I learned to know and to love him as few of the other assistants did,

for those were days of rapid changes in the assistant secretaryship. As fast as men were trained, they would be called to other fields and larger opportunities, and Mr. McBurney was never unwilling to yield them, though it entailed much additional work on himself. He has remained to me the ideal of a Christian worker. There may be other counselors as wise as he was, as brilliant organizers, as efficient administrators and as loyal leaders; but I fear there never will be one who will combine all of these valuable qualifications in so marked a degree as Mr. McBurney did, coupled with a genuine love for young men, as sympathetic as a woman's, as true as steel, and as enduring as only his can be who has been planted on the everlasting rock and walks in the footsteps of the Master."

One of the international secretaries on the foreign field writes from Rio de Janeiro:

"As one of the thousands of young men upon whom the loving interest of Mr. McBurney had a beneficial effect, I desire to put on record my sense of personal loss at his death. His influence on the lives of the younger men in the secretaryship has often been remarked upon, and I am one of those who owe much to his kind and loving personality. When first considering my call to the foreign field, Mr. McBurney's letters did much to strengthen me, and to make clear the path of God's leading. Later, when in Kansas City in 1890, I shall never forget the day I received a telegram from Mr. McBurney from Denver, asking me to meet him at the railroad station as he passed through on his way east. His kind words, full of a loving, personal interest in me, helped me to a decision at the most important crisis of my life. When in New York, on two different occasions, preparatory to coming out to Brazil, I had occasion to profit by friendly intercourse and conference with Mr. McBurney. One remembrance I highly prize is that of

an invitation to the 'tower room,' whose very atmosphere seemed charged with association history and a pervading love of young men. There I spent some hours in delightful conversation, receiving instruction and counsel of untold value to a young secretary about to undertake a pioneer work on the foreign field. I shall never forget our prayer together in that tower room. Later, in the midst of difficult problems on the field and altogether isolated from helpful associates or colleagues, Mr. McBurney's letters, as chairman of the international committee's sub-committee on foreign work, were full of helpfulness, while at the same time the personal element in the letters was always of great comfort and encouragement."

From Adelaide, Australia:

"The association board sends expression of its sense of loss sustained in the removal of Robert McBurney."

From the general secretary of the association in Sydney, Australia:

"Mr. McBurney was a great and good man, who willingly gave his life and labors for the good of young men. Much of the success of the Young Men's Christian Association in your country is due to his great energy, sound judgment, and common sense. He will be greatly missed and we in this far off land join with the hundreds who mourn the loss of a loved friend and brother and yet rejoice he has been called by the Master to his reward."

From the chairman of the executive committee of the Maritime Provinces of Canada:

"On behalf of our committee I beg to express our regrets at not being able to send a representative to the memorial services on Sunday next in connection with the removal by death of Robert R. McBurney, so long identified with the work in New York city and as a leading

member of the international committee so well known to our membership in Canada. What Mr. McBurney was privileged to do for the Young Men's Christian Association in the earlier days of its history is known to few, but that the present position of the organization in your city and on this continent is in a large measure due to his earnest self-denying labors is known to all who are identified with the work."

From the board of directors of the Hamilton, Canada, Young Men's Christian Association:

"The sympathy of our association is extended to the associations of New York city upon the death of their late general secretary, Mr. Robert R. McBurney. The association world will miss his wise counsel and kindly direction. To him the associations owe much for their present strong and influential position, and our prayer is that God, who in his wisdom removed our brother, may raise up another leader to take his place."

From the association board at Syracuse, N. Y.:

"The cause of young men throughout this and other lands has met with a great loss. We also owe him a debt of gratitude for his spirit of helpfulness and his unselfish regard for us in our local work. And we desire to testify from a personal knowledge of his great worth, to the pure, noble and Christian life he has led, by which he has endeared himself to thousands of young men who have been made the better by his having lived."

A leading officer in the New York association testifies:

"His whole thought was the building up of the association, as he believed with intensity and singleness of purpose that the association if properly developed would prove a most elevating influence upon the lives of young men, as well as a most powerful help to the church of

Christ. He never allowed his social duties or pleasures to interfere with his work for the association. By day and in the evening, and sometimes far into the early morning, he toiled at the task he had set before himself. He took few and brief vacations and always seemed to be restless and unhappy until he returned to his labors. His biography is therefore written in the history of the association."

**From one who was associated with him in the work of his office:**

"When our three dear children died of diphtheria suddenly in 1877, he supervised the arrangements for the funeral and showed us a sympathy and gave us a helping hand that time nor distance can blot out of our memory. He has left an inspiration to every one who knew him intimately. His acts, methods and personality are indelibly impressed on my heart and mind. Though seventeen years have passed since I spent those thirteen years with him in association work and though we have not met during this period, I seem to see him to-day more plainly than ever. I have never had a better friend, counselor and brother."

**From a director of the New York association:**

"No one can ever cope with him in the extraordinary winsomeness and sweetness of his character. My first impression never changed. In all my dealings with him I never saw one like him in genuine unaffected worth."

**From a pastor in New York:**

"I shall always cherish the memory of that great and strong man of God—my more than friend—Robert R. McBurney—of whom may be said that which is inscribed upon the memorial of 'Chinese Gordon' in St. Paul's cathedral, London, 'He gave his substance to the poor; his strength to the weak; his sympathy to the suffering; his heart to God.'"

From a former vice president of the New York association:

"I have been associated with that exemplary Christian and talented organizer for a long term of years. Mr. McBurney's death comes to me as that of a brother. If it may be said of any one that he has gone to his reward, it may be surely said of him."

From a former associate in the secretarial office of the New York association:

"There are many who have known Robert McBurney longer but few who have worked side by side with him more years than I did. As I think of those years I realize how much I owe to him for his example of humility and personal *devotion to unattractive men*, for his love for the Bible and skill in its *practical* application to men's needs, for his frank criticisms, sound and wholesome if not always agreeable, and for most loving and generous kindness to me and mine at trying hours in our family life. We who are left must dedicate ourselves afresh to that work for young men in which he has so long been our leader."

From a teacher and trainer of secretaries:

"I was a young secretary at the secretaries' conference, without training, greatly impressed with the knowledge and dignity of the great men in the work, wanting to inquire but not willing to be heard. Mr. McBurney insisted that the older men should not occupy all the time but that the secretaries new in the work should have plenty of time to ask questions or even talk. He was such a friend of the younger men. He was determined that they should grow, and seemed to lose himself in the very endeavor to make this possible. I loved the man, and though never associated with him personally, his life had a marked influence on mine."

One of his associates writes as an eye-witness of  
his daily work:

"Young men were quick to learn how genuine and sincere was his sympathy, how spontaneous his generosity, how keen his insight, how wise his judgment, and they could not long resist the power of his love. He seemed bound to know what this boy did yesterday, what he was going to do next, to learn by close inquiry his needs and to supply them as a father would. To be sure he never saw him before, but here he was;—that was enough. The greater the boy's need, the deeper was his interest. He would often follow a young man to the door and beyond, as if he could not bear him out of his sight. Why? Because he was only a lad and a stranger in this great city. Toward such his heart was ever yearning."

One of the leaders in the Student Settlement Work in New York writes:

"In Mr. McBurney's death I realize the loss of a personal friend. I remember well meeting him first on the occasion of a visit of his to Yale, made during my freshman year. The respect which I conceived for him at that time has ever remained. During my college life and afterwards, including the last year, I often went to him for counsel and always found him wise, courageous and helpful. Intelligence fired by steady conviction impressed me as his most remarkable characteristic. All of us who admired his spirit must feel that an added responsibility is placed upon us to work harder for righteousness and godliness in this city because his strong influence has departed, except as those who have felt his spirit give worthy expression of it."

A leader for many years in the student association work in the south writes:

"How vividly I recall my first meeting with our ever

loving friend, Robert McBurney, at the international convention in Atlanta in 1875. But for his cordial greeting and hearty welcome I would have continued to feel out of place as I did at the beginning of the convention, and would have returned home without a further thought or care for the association movement. To his inspiration is due any development in the college work which I may have initiated or sustained."

A very aged man writes:

"His kindness of heart was inexhaustible. He always impressed me as being deeply and truly religious, and was so morally clean and spiritually pure that it was a privilege and pleasure to have one's soul close to his. He was refined, gentle, winning, and yet thoroughly manly. At my age, over eighty years, I have admired a number of men, but I loved Mr. McBurney. During nearly twenty years' service under him I came to know him well, saw and studied his nature; in fact, this great quality of manliness was mirrored in his face. I never shall forget his greeting in the morning, it was like a benediction that lasted the whole day."

From a former president of the international convention:

"He was a useful man, wholly given over to the purpose for which God designed him. Of him, as of David, it may be truthfully said: 'He served his own generation by the will of God.' He was a sincere man, transparent and free from sham; he actually was just what he professed to be. He was a man of stability and therefore strong; nothing was permitted to divert him from the definite purpose which shaped his course of life. Because of these characteristics his life was beautiful, with a beauty not of mere ornamentation, but with the natural and proper crown to the superstructure of gold, silver and precious stones he reared in life upon the

broad and secure foundation laid for him in Jesus Christ, whom he loved and served."

**Another leader in the American association work writes:**

"Mr. McBurney's life has been a benediction to every man who has come in contact with him. Manly, noble, fearless, pure, tender, strong, and loving, his life has not been lived in vain. Men throughout the world are under a debt of gratitude to him. He has wrought his life into theirs. He has brought a supplemental force and power to struggling lives. His plan, his purpose, his mind and heart have been wrought into constitutions, principles and moving powers of a great organization which is now at work in nearly every centre of young men in the civilized world."

**A physician in New Jersey, who was in 1866 a medical student in New York, writes:**

"I came across a few days ago the original draft of a constitution that he and I as a committee drew up in the winter of 1865-66 for the 'Medical Students' Union.' It is mostly in his handwriting. He was always reaching out his hand of help toward young men and I think he originated this movement—possibly the beginning of association work among students in New York City. I was called home by sickness about that time and did not return that winter, so did not follow up the work."

**From a pastor in Ohio:**

"With an acquaintance numbering among the thousands, I do not think there lives the man who knew him who would not have a kind word to say about him or some tender recollection to relate. I have seen him empty his bureau of his best clothing for an apparently worthless, drunken tramp, and spend his last cent of ready money upon him. His was truly a great heart. He could see and love the soul hidden in the drunken sot."

From a secretary in a southern city:

"When I came to New York in 1888, he seemed at once to take a personal interest in me, and if I have been of any service to the association cause, it is largely due, under God, to the thoughtful, loving kindness shown me by Robert McBurney, not only in those early days of my association experience, but also to the very end of his life."

A secretary of twenty years' experience testifies:

"The first time I ever met Mr. McBurney was as a delegate to a state convention. He asked me up to his room, and his talk with me gave me great pleasure. He was very kind, and I think the reason was that I was unknown and obscure. That is a reason somewhat different from the one which attracts many of us to others. Since then we have been closely associated for many years. Not long before his sickness I was walking with him in New York after a church service and I saw a sudden light come into his face as he met a young man, a student from Canada who was just going home to visit his friends. I never saw Mr. McBurney quite so happy as when he was greeting somebody who was away from home. I remember vividly what he said that day turning to me as we left his friend: 'That young man is going to his earthly home, but I am going to my heavenly home very soon.' He seemed to know it even then."

Another secretary, equally as long in the work:

"Mr. McBurney was a great man. He was great by nature; he was greater far by grace. Yet the finest thing about him was his simplicity and modesty. He was never spoiled by success or flattery. He was the most natural man I ever knew in my life. He had large business responsibilities resting upon him—larger than those of any local secretary in this country. Yet so full

was his spiritual life that they never checked it. The high function of the general secretary as a spiritual leader of young men he felt should never be delegated into other hands. He magnified his office. He illustrated it and made it honorable. He was supremely a spiritual worker. He was in his office to lead men to Jesus Christ. He could not be institutionalized. In the midst of all his varied activities he remained ever the warm, sympathetic, devoted, successful, personal worker, Bible teacher and spiritual leader."

An eminent clergyman, who was for some years associated with him in the office of the New York association, writes:

"Robert R. McBurney was my most intimate friend for thirty years and I loved him as a brother loves. He mastered the lessons of love and put the courage that hopeth all things into thousands of hearts. To those who loved him the world will always be a richer place because of his life, and another deep affection will make the life to which he has gone nearer and dearer."

An experienced secretary writes:

"Mr. McBurney's helpful suggestions, words of encouragement and prayers for guidance in my first field of association effort exerted a lasting influence upon my life."

The president of the St. Louis association writes:

"For twenty years I have admired, respected and loved Robert McBurney. Next to his good judgment and piety I have been impressed by his gentle and thoughtful consideration for those who were young in the work. In this he excelled all the men I have ever known. The next thing that impressed me was his

genuine interest in young men. I feel his death as a personal loss and I am certain this feeling is shared by thousands."

A clergyman—one of the many fellow workers associated with him for some years—writes:

"It is not difficult to enumerate Mr. McBurney's excellences of heart and mind; his wondrous capacity for loving men, his fine executive ability, his tenacity of purpose, his intuition, almost womanly, in seizing on and developing the good which he was so quick to discover in others, his great reverence for the Scriptures, his delight in social converse on high themes and in praying with his friends in the old 'tower room,' which is a sanctuary in the memory of so many who knew him, his deep loyalty to our Saviour and his never wavering hope for mankind through the practical preaching of Christ. When God gave me a son I named him Robert McBurney, and I have no higher aspiration for my boy than that he may resemble our friend in character. He was the cleanest man I ever knew. An impure word was like a blow. How he rejoiced in getting a man away from evil associations, and teaching him by his own example, as well as by precept, the worth of purity and truth and honor."

One of the strongest among the association secretaries writes:

"At my first secretaries' conference I was a stranger to nearly every one, feeling lonely and isolated. But there was one man there who seemed to take an especial interest in me. Well do I remember how he took me by the arm and walked me about the streets for a couple of hours while he plied me with questions about my life work and gave counsel such as one rarely receives from his dearest friends. Mr. McBurney was the one who thus went out of his way to make the intimate acquaint-

ance of one who was a stranger. For what a multitude of young men has he performed the same loving service!"

Another veteran leader among the secretaries writes:

"He entered upon the secretaryship without education or experience and grew with its growth in all necessary equipment. He began his work as a stripling and finished as a giant. He trained with the chief men of the association movement at home and abroad in their march to victory and fell at the head of the column. He denied himself a home of his own to serve with singleness of purpose the young men of his generation. To almost all kinds of philanthropic and Christian endeavor he lent a helping hand, but the work in which he most served the Master and his church was that of the association, and as long as that organization lives and works for young men the name of Robert McBurney will be held in blessed memory."

One of his oldest associates in the secretaryship writes:

"He was a master of the principles which underlie and promote the life and usefulness of the association. He knew the rocks of danger and how to avoid them. There was an entire absence of the air of officialism in his intercourse with young men. His peculiarities, instead of detracting from him, seemed to add interest to his personality. He was a man of culture and had read extensively. His library was large and well chosen. I never heard him in any of his addresses use a single word of slang. He despised it."

The chairman of the international committee writes:

"No single city could circumscribe the field of his activity. The problems he wrought out in New York

became object lessons to the associations of the entire continent. His figure and voice were familiar for over thirty years in the frequent conventions of our states and continent, and his influence was everywhere felt in promoting the progress and shaping the policy of the associations. All who came in contact with Mr. McBurney as a fellow worker learned to love and admire him. His life and example are a rich heritage to the entire association movement, and his death has come as a personal bereavement to many thousands of those who have known and loved him."

Another veteran in the secretaryship and an intimate friend says:

"He was, in the best and highest sense of the words, a spiritually minded man; genuinely and sincerely such. I never knew any one more so. He exercised the utmost charity in his judgment of his fellowmen. Strong in his own convictions and character, he had the most humble opinion of his own attainments and thus was able to bear with patience the weaknesses and failings of others. His love and reverence for the Word of God was deep and constant, permeating and controlling all his thought. Great as was the work he accomplished, greater still was the man behind it. It is not for what he did but for what he was I shall most miss him."

Another who had known him many years says:

"The sweetness that can come into a life of loneliness is to me one of the marked lessons of Mr. McBurney's life. He came from across the sea alone. He lived in a little tower room alone, and even as death drew near there was no wife, no brother, no sister, no one of earthly kin with him. But through all that life of loneliness the great heart of love was poured into the lives of others. The loneliness of his own life did not make him misanthropic. It made him philanthropic and his heart was ever going out to others."

A state secretary says:

"The best time for me to get his counsel during his busy days and years was in the morning. I would go to his tower room—not too early—and while he was dressing and shaving, his mind was free and comparatively unoccupied. As I reported the work and took counsel with him he would often get very indignant and storm about the foolhardiness and foolishness of certain people; and yet it would end in his sitting down, taking up his little Bible to read his morning lesson, and then praying for these very men he had been storming about!"

One of the strongest and ablest association leaders during the past thirty years says:

"I went to my first international convention in 1868 at Detroit, as one of a large and strong delegation from a leading city of the central west. The proposition to adopt the evangelical test of active membership was brought up. I had been an active member before I became a Christian and I went to the convention to oppose the adoption of the test suggested as strongly as I knew how. Mr. McBurney heard of this somehow and got a member of the New York delegation to have a talk with me. They both went over the whole subject with me and so impressed all the delegates from our city that we stood behind the New York delegates and shouted with them and kept still when they kept still!

The next year at the Portland Convention I served on one of the committees. I met Mr. McBurney in connection with my committee work and had a chance to perceive how it was that he ran the convention.

"Soon after my return I was inveigled into the secretaryship of the association in our city. I had a supreme contempt for the association secretaryship, but I was persuaded it was my Christian duty to take it. So I took it and did the best I could.

"Some years later at the opening of another inter-

national convention Mr. McBurney came to me and said that a delegation from one section of the country wanted to make their leader president of the convention. 'It will never do,' he added, 'for him to hold that position here.' We decided that a delegate, who, while we were speaking, was still on his way to the convention from another section of the country, was the man for president. Now so far as I know, Mr. McBurney, one other delegate and myself were the only ones in the convention who knew this man. But he was enthusiastically elected and Mr. McBurney's was the influence that accomplished it."

A secretary for more than twenty years says:

"My business engagement in a small town near New York ended in February, 1877, and soon after I called on Mr. McBurney in his office. He greeted me very warmly as I came in, but as we have often seen him do, he went on with his writing while I went on to tell my story. I said: 'I have come to inquire what I had better do to prepare myself for the secretaryship.' (This occurred many years before the secretarial training schools were founded.) 'Why,' said he, 'you have not given up your business, have you?' When I replied that I had, he said, 'You are a fool.' But when we had talked further no man could have been more cordial than he, and he proposed to me to go first of all to the Bowery branch. Years after he told me that what most impressed him at our first meeting was my great awkwardness and how little I seemed to have of qualification for the secretaryship. I do not recollect my first meeting with him in his tower room. But I have been there many times. There was always room for me there when I came to town, and many nights I have spent on his ample lounge-bed, and shall never forget his conversations before retiring and again in the morning and our prayers together, for I always felt stronger after praying with him."

Another veteran secretary with whom he was often closely associated says:

"Mr. McBurney and I often disagreed. I think that was one reason why we loved each other so much. It used to frighten me to see him come into a church meeting where I was going to speak. I never could quite account for it, because I believed in his genuineness and sympathy. But later all this embarrassment passed away. I was always impressed with the very deep seriousness of his religious life. I never went on an outing with him until some years ago. One reason was that neither of us was quite sure it would be agreeable! Finally we did go and I was fearful that as the younger man I would find it hard to make it pleasant for him. But instead of finding him exacting I found it hard to make him appropriate his share of anything; he was so unselfish."

**From one of the younger secretaries:**

"I first met Mr. McBurney when I was conducting my first boys' meeting in a small city. A man came into the room quietly, whom I did not know until after the meeting to be Mr. McBurney. I was at once impressed with his great sympathy and love for boys by the way he got hold of the hands of those little fellows and seemed so much interested in every one of them. Later, as I came to know him better, I was impressed more than anything else with the deep prayer life of the man. Dozens of times when I have been in his office he practiced and urged praying about the problems in our work. Another trait of his was the dispatch with which he could get rid of a man when he was too busy to give him time. He could shake your hand and shake you out of the office at the same time."

**From another:**

"As I recall my feelings towards Mr. McBurney when

he first began to show an interest in me I can easily understand how so many say he was a father to them. Not having any children of his own, he made all young men children to himself. He saw something to love in many young fellows whom you and I would not feel drawn to shake hands with or even speak to. He had a knowledge of young men's hearts, and a sympathy with them beyond any man I ever met."

A very clever man writes:

"I sat behind him on the train between New York and New Haven. A young man sat down in the seat with him. Mr. McBurney got into conversation with him. The fellow was flippant, but without the least break or discontinuance in the conversation they began talking about religion in a personal way, the fellow stating what he thought and Mr. McBurney telling what he thought. After this the fellow was sobered. It was plain to see that the older man wanted to be in relation to the young man on this most important subject. I understood for the first time what genuine, wise personal work is."

One of the younger men gives the following typical experience:

"It was at a conference in New York state. I was one of the kids in the work. I knew him well by reputation, but did not know him as a man approachable by us new fellows. After one of the sessions he passed his arm through mine and said: 'Let us take a walk.' I was in the seventh heaven. We started out on the street that led to the lake. He did not say anything about association work but pointed to noteworthy objects. He was very observant. Then he switched around toward the town. We got into the neighborhood of the china and bric-a-brac shops. He went into a store and saw an old clock that pleased him very much. I had an idea he would buy it if he got the right price on it."

From a secretary in a large western city:

"I had just entered the work, knowing almost nothing about the Young Men's Christian Association and feeling my insignificance as never before in my life. Passing through New York I visited the Twenty-third Street branch not expecting that the general secretary of the New York association would pay any more attention to me than perhaps to say 'howdy.' I met him, was taken to the tower room, was made to feel that he had a personal interest in me and that I was his brother. He took me to dinner with him that evening and introduced me as his friend. From that day I loved Robert McBurney. It has been my privilege to meet him often since my first experience with him fifteen years ago, and to me he was always the same. Never too busy to help with a word of advice or encouragement."

From another:

"The last public meeting he ever addressed was the young men's meeting at Harlem branch, New York, the third Sunday in December, 1897. Throughout the address he seemed to feel that his work was nearly done, and I shall never forget how he told the story of the gospel and pleaded with men to give their hearts and lives to Christ. Three or four responded to this appeal and gave good evidence of radical change. Through all the service he seemed to desire that every word should count."

One in the front rank of veteran secretaries writes:

"Well do I remember the first time I met dear Robert McBurney. It was in 1873, at the Poughkeepsie conference and convention. He gave me such a hearty greeting and kindly encouragement that I felt I had found a permanent friend. A few years later, at another convention Mr. McBurney took me aside and gave me some timely advice which at the time appeared rather severe,

yet ere long I discovered that it was the best service he had ever rendered me."

**Another leader in the secretaryship writes:**

"In September, 1881, I went to New York from my New England home for the purpose of studying the association work in that city while awaiting a definite call to a field. My experience had been limited to a small town association, but through the persuasion of state and international secretaries I had given up business plans and had fully determined to enter the association as a life work. Mr. McBurney welcomed me immediately upon my arrival in New York and for the first time I thus came in contact with his strong personality. That evening he invited me to dinner, and afterward I accompanied him to a meeting of the managing committee of the Bowery branch. During the following week he offered words of encouragement and instruction, and cheered and strengthened me for the work I was soon to enter. I have always felt much indebted to him for the inspiration which came to me from his life at this pivotal time in my experience; and from that time I have greatly valued his counsel and friendship."

**Another general secretary for twenty-seven years writes:**

"I recall with so much real satisfaction my first meeting with Mr. McBurney. It was shortly after my appointment as general secretary of a New England city in 1872. Time cannot efface the memories of that hour, of his brotherly advice, wise counsel and heart sympathy with me just entering my life work. We met frequently in that tower room during my nine years' stay in that city. Then, when the Master indicated my removal to the west, as I accepted the call with many misgivings he again by his loving sympathy so thoroughly strengthened my heart and hands; and all through these years to the time of his death we were close together and an intimate

friendship grew up between us almost akin to that of Jonathan and David. His life, his work, his devotion to Christ and the service of young men, were always an inspiration to me. Nearly the last letter I received from him when his earthly house was failing expressed solicitude for my health and his great and continued interest in our work in this far away western field.

“I take the liberty of enclosing copy of a letter received from Mr. McBurney written on the occasion of the completion of my twenty-fifth consecutive year in the secretarial office, not because of its reference to me personally but because in every line it breathes the great soul of the man:

“So you have become a quarter-centenary secretary. Pretty long title!

“Your work in your first field placed the association in a position of usefulness and influence such as it had never enjoyed before, and your going to the west and your work there has made you, with God’s blessing, the saviour of that work. \* \* \* \* \*

“While you have served men, you have served them for Christ’s sake—not for the praise of men but for the glory of God. You are loved by our entire brotherhood as few men are. I thank God that I have had the privilege of being associated with you in the labor of love to which we have been permitted to devote the best years of our lives.”

#### A veteran in the state secretaryship writes:

“My first acquaintance with Mr. McBurney was in 1880 at the secretaries’ conference held in Chicago. As one of the younger secretaries, I did not quickly come into intimate acquaintance with him, but our friendship grew with the years. His remarkable steadfastness of purpose, his whole-hearted loyalty to this work to which he had given his life, his burning enthusiasm for the association, his constant desire to come into personal touch with young men, have all had their influence upon

my own personal life. I shall hope to tell him, sometime, when we sit in the day that has no twilight, of the effect of his life upon mine."

The first secretary of the international committee for work among students writes:

"The first glimpse I ever had of Mr. McBurney was at the international convention in 1872, whither I had gone as a delegate from the Hanover College Association. Thane Miller had nominated him for the presidency of the convention, and urged as a reason for his election that McBurney was going that summer to Amsterdam to attend the World's Conference and that it was very fitting that the American delegate should be the president of our convention. Mr. Miller had also been nominated for the position. Mr. McBurney stoutly opposed the substitution of his name, and Mr. Miller was elected.

"My next meeting with him was in the old international office in the association building, which I visited during the Christmas holidays of 1876 for the purpose of conferring with the committee in regard to the proposed conference of students which afterward met at Louisville in 1877, and inaugurated the intercollegiate movement. Our conference was very brief, but he expressed the deepest interest in the proposed student movement.

"Our next meeting was in Princeton the Sunday after the day of prayer for colleges in 1877. He and Mr. Morse came there by invitation. I had much personal conference with them in regard to my life work. I was then beginning to think seriously of the secretaryship. I well remember Mr. McBurney's strongly advising me to take the theological course which I had been contemplating. I also distinctly remember the strong impression he made upon the students because of his knowledge of the Bible and his ability to use it in meeting the objections of unconverted men.

"I met him again in Louisville at the time of the organ-

ization of the intercollegiate movement, but the most important meeting I ever had with him was in August, 1877, at the Indiana State convention. I had been nominated by the college conference at the Louisville convention to serve as college secretary of the international committee. He asked me what my plan was for the extension of the college movement. I told him. He entered heartily into it, and agreed on his return to New York to lay the matter before the committee and bring something to pass. He did so, and the result was that I was called to the college secretaryship in September. I shall always feel that his influence in that matter was more potent than that of any one else, and that he therefore exerted a determining influence upon the course of my life work.

"I have been associated with him intimately ever since that time, and never more so than during the years from 1888 to 1895. He, more than any other member of the committee, strongly believed in the foreign work and encouraged me at every step of it.

"It was a great privilege to me when I last sat beside him in Clifton Springs to tell him what he had been to me and to the work for which I have stood. I was told afterward that it was a great surprise to him that he had had so dominant an influence in the college and foreign movements. I think he rarely realized his important relation to the great movements with which he was vitally connected."

#### A friend writes:

"The manner in which he greeted a young man made an indelible impression. It was quiet, earnest, loving. The clasp of his hand expressed all this, and no one failed to be affected by it. His sympathetic nature won the heart of the stranger in the city and made it possible for him to be led into helpful associations. Young men who had lost hope because of prodigal living, and had

reached the prodigal's forlorn estate, were lovingly led back to a heavenly Father's heart.

"A young man, a frequent visitor to the association, was one evening accosted by Mr. McBurney, who had with the keen intuition of his loving nature observed that some burden oppressed him. The manner of the young man's replies to his kindly enquiries satisfied him that the matter was a serious one. He drew him affectionately into his private office and there listened to a romantic but unhappy story of a secret marriage, parental opposition, separation, despair. His good advice determined the young man's course of action and saved him.

"A gentleman who knew him well says that while he had known many men intimately, some of them accustomed to carry the burdens of multitudes, he never had but one friend from whom he could always ask counsel when in perplexity with the same assurance of wise and loving help. To him he kept going for advice, for sympathy, and as a young man even for financial aid, and always with the same result. One felt that he not only gave wise counsel but gave himself."

#### A friend writes:

"As an illustration of Mr. McBurney's thoughtfulness and interest in every one, however overlooked and neglected, an incident occurs to my mind that powerfully impressed me at the time.

"Mr. McBurney lived in the tower of the Twenty-third street association building, in two rooms overlooking the city. The living room was thoroughly interesting, filled with picturesque bookshelves, curios, bric-a-brac,—a thousand and one objects of interest,—and fragrant with the spirit of its occupant who thus in more ways than one dwelt near to heaven. One rainy day he was in this room with several amanuenses and others, engaged in correspondence and in preparing the material for the association monthly publication. In the midst of the scratching of pens and the rustling of papers a little

district messenger boy who had climbed up the weary stairs from the wet of the street brought in a message. As he was leaving Mr. McBurney unobtrusively detained him by asking him a few simple questions to put him at his ease, and then left his work, laid aside the mantle of haste that had before enveloped him, walked with the boy around the room showing him various objects of interest and the views from the windows, in short, made him feel as if he were a real human being instead of a mere messenger boy. Such an extraordinary act on the part of a busy man, I have never been able to forget. It was a simple thing to do, but it serves to show how genuine was his love of humanity.

"One rainy evening before dinner I was walking with him when we overtook a grocer's errand boy with a basket of groceries on one arm and several bundles of kindling wood stacked up on the other. At the moment we reached him the kindling wood toppled over on the pavement. It was not in the way of pedestrians, and after the manner of New Yorkers, I would never have given the incident a second thought had not Mr. McBurney said quietly, "Wait a moment," and gone over and helped the boy to load up again. In one way I felt embarrassed by his kindness to the boy, as selfishness often is by generosity, but in another I bowed my head in humble obeisance to the image of the Christ my heart beheld. I am sure it is what Jesus would have done.

"Perhaps one of the most striking incidents with which I am acquainted illustrating his unselfishness was his refusal at one time to accept from the board of directors an increase of salary on the plea that he did not need it, being single, and his insistence that the contemplated increase be bestowed upon his associate in office, who was a married man with children. He gave away his money as quickly as it was earned and kept little for himself.

## RESOLUTIONS

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Resolutions passed by the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations:

At a regular meeting of the committee, held January 12, 1899, the following minute was unanimously adopted:

Our committee and the whole association brotherhood in this and other lands have suffered a severe bereavement in the death of Robert R. McBurney, and the committee desire to place upon their minutes an expression of their profound sense of loss and of their brotherly affection and appreciation of the character, work and life of their associate.

Mr. McBurney was connected with the committee as a leader from its appointment in 1866. His connection with it as an active executive member ceased in 1895, but he continued as an advisory member. It was on his motion, as chairman of the Albany convention committee in 1866, that the present international committee was located in this city by that convention. He therefore appreciated and had part in defining from the beginning the function and work of the committee, and during the first thirty years of its history he was one of the most active members in its deliberations and conclusions, in explaining and reporting its work at conventions, and in taking part in that work on the field of the committee's service. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of the contribution which he brought to the committee's administration and work. During these thirty years he

was the leading general secretary of the country and of the world, for it was during his secretaryship that the New York association, through the erection and occupation of the Twenty-third street building, sprang to the leadership of the associations of the entire brotherhood. What he brought to the committee's deliberations and action was the result of his growing achievement as general secretary of the New York association, where he was settling the problem of the work and function of the association more successfully than any other secretary; as father and founder of the state work of New York; and as leader of the American brotherhood of general secretaries which in its annual meetings was defining and working out from year to year under his guidance the function and qualifications of the general secretaryship. Through him, therefore, the committee and its secretaries were always kept in contact with the forward line of association advance and development.

But Mr. McBurney was also among us not only as an association leader of extraordinary capacity and qualification, but as a brother beloved for his own sake, full of consecration to this work in Christ's name, and full also of the spirit of his Master. Fellowship with him was not only profitable and helpful but delightful, and as we mourn his loss we also rejoice in the thought of that certain and blessed reunion in a closer fellowship with our Lord himself which will prove as unending as it will be satisfying.

#### Resolutions passed by the New York State Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations:

At a meeting of the New York State Committee held March 30, 1899 the following resolutions were adopted:

On December 27, 1898, Robert R. McBurney died at Clifton Springs, N. Y., after an illness of more than a year. He came to America from Ireland in 1854, at the

age of seventeen, and visited the rooms of the New York city association on the evening of his arrival in this country. In 1862 he became the employed superintendent of that association, a position which soon developed into the general secretaryship, the first in the history of our associations.

The growth of the work under his direction resulted in the erection of the building on the corner of Twenty-third street and Fourth avenue, the first building in the world planned and erected especially for Young Men's Christian Association use, which became a model for the three hundred association buildings of this country. His general supervision of the New York association continued until his death, at which time it included sixteen branches and ten buildings.

Mr. McBurney was a leader in the association work of the whole world. In 1866 he called the first convention of the associations of this state, from which our state work has grown. He was a member of this state executive committee for over thirty years, rendering incalculable service in the development of our associations. The definite character of our work for young men is largely due to his far-sighted and unswerving stand for its biblical and evangelical basis. His deep piety and earnestness as a personal worker gave him great success in his influence over young men. We shall miss his wise counsel and his warm-hearted greetings. He was faithful in every duty, a true servant of God. He rests from his labors and his works do follow him.

Resolutions passed by the Committee of Management of the Twenty-third Street Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association of the City of New York:

At a meeting of the Committee of Management held February 27, 1899, the following minute was unanimously adopted:

*Whereas*, After a long life of usefulness and self-sacrifice for the young men of New York and the world, Robert R. McBurney has been called to his eternal home by Almighty God, and

*Whereas*, Mr. McBurney was from the beginning most closely identified with the Twenty-third Street Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association, and by his frequent presence in the rooms and at the meetings was a continual stimulus to every one who met him to lead a better and more useful life, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we, the members of the Committee of Management of the Twenty-third Street Branch, do express our great sorrow at the loss we have suffered, and be it further

*Resolved*, That we strive to show by our lives the benefit that we have derived from our contact with Mr. McBurney, forgetting ourselves and trying to do for others.

CHARLES A. B. PRATT,  
C. W. McALPIN,  
J. EDGAR LEAYCRAFT,

*Committee.*

#### Resolutions passed by the Literary Society of the Twenty-third Street Branch:

*Whereas*, Robert R. McBurney, for nearly forty years general secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association of the city of New York, and not only *ex-officio* member of the Literary Society of the Twenty-third Street Branch but also by personal choice a charter member thereof, has, in the providence of God, departed this life; and

*Whereas*, As an earnest, active and enthusiastic friend of the Literary Society and of the individual members thereof, as well as by his personal uprightness and integrity and his deep interest in young men in general, he has both merited and received our affection and esteem; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That in his death the Literary Society of the Twenty-third Street Branch has experienced the loss of a sincere and trusted member, friend and counsellor, one who was at all times ready and willing and efficient to advance the best interests of the Literary Society and of its members;

*Resolved*, That in common with all who are interested in the work of the Young Men's Christian Association we sorrow under the loss which his decease has occasioned, while we rejoice with them in the rich heritage of character, good deeds and beneficent influence which he has left behind him.

WILLIAM GEORGE GREENE,

*Recording Secretary.*

Resolution passed by the Managing Committee  
of the Boys' Department of the Twenty-  
third Street Branch:

At the January monthly meeting of the Managing Committee of the Boys' Department of the Twenty-third Street Branch, the following resolution was carried unanimously:

*Resolved*, That the members of this committee, having learned with deep regret of the "falling asleep" of Mr. Robert R. McBurney, our beloved general secretary, desire to express their sincere sympathy and to place on record their sense of the great loss sustained by the boys' departments and the association, not only in this city but throughout the world, through the demise of our true friend and brother, whose place it will be impossible to fill in the hearts and affections of the members of the New York City Association.

HAROLD W. BUCHANAN,

*Chairman Boys' Department.*

GUY C. MITCHELL,

*Secretary Boys' Department.*

Resolution passed by the Committee of Management of the Harlem Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association of the City of New York:

At a regular meeting of the Committee of Management of the Harlem Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association, the following resolution was adopted:

*Resolved*, By the Committee of Management of the Harlem Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association that we place upon our records a minute expressing the deep sorrow of the committee at the recent death of the general secretary of the New York City association, Robert R. McBurney. Mr. McBurney's labors in behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association are so universally recognized as the main cause for the great development and successful operation of the Young Men's Christian Associations throughout this country, that the place he has filled cannot, we fear, ever be adequately supplied. The combination of qualities in him was so remarkable and so calculated to equip him for his life work, that it seems as though a special providence directed him to the Young Men's Christian Association while it was still in its infancy. Personally he was beloved by every one and the influence of his life will continue to increase in strength and importance for many years to come.

W. S. M. SILBER,  
*Recording Secretary.*

Resolution passed by the Committee of Management of the Students' Club of the Young Men's Christian Association of the City of New York:

The members of the Committee of Management of the Students' Club recognize the vital relation that Mr. Robert R. McBurney has borne to the Students'

Branch of the New York City Young Men's Christian Association from its inception, and know that even during his last illness he was strong in his affection for it. His memory will be a constant inspiration to those who knew him, and those whom he left behind will strive to emulate his example in devotion to the simple teachings of his Master and in consecration to the work of leading young men one by one through sympathetic words and helpful offices to Jesus Christ.

HERVE W. GEORGI, *Secretary.*

Resolutions passed by the Board of Management of the Washington Heights Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association of the City of New York:

At a meeting of the Board of Management of the Washington Heights Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association of New York, held December 31, 1898, the following memorial resolutions were adopted:

*Whereas*, In the order of Divine Providence our beloved brother, Robert R. McBurney, has been called from labor to reward, and our hearts have been deeply moved thereby; therefore,

*Resolved*, that in the absence of our brother and fellow laborer, the members of this Branch and the young men of kindred associations will greatly miss the wise and helpful counsel, the Christian cheer and sympathy of him who was notably and many times their personal friend and benefactor.

*Resolved*, That our departed brother was endeared to the members of this Branch by his presence so often with us in our councils and his kindly and self-sacrificing interest in our welfare; that we will ever cherish a profound veneration for his long and faithful services.

*Resolved*, That we tender to the General Board of Management our heartfelt sympathy.

E. B. TREAT,  
J. BERG ESENWEIN,  
H. J. ROBINSON,

*Committee.*

Resolutions passed by the Executive Committee  
of the Young Women's Christian Associa-  
tion of the City of New York, January 5,  
1899:

The Executive Committee of the Young Women's Christian Association of the City of New York, in common with Christian associations throughout the country, mourns sincerely the death of Mr. Robert R. McBurney,

As one of the ten original incorporators of the association and always on its advisory board, Mr. McBurney shared the burdens and responsibilities of the early years of the association's history and for twenty-seven years sustained an unfailing interest in its work. To his clear judgment, wise methods, and rare fidelity, are due in a large measure the growth and expansion of the association.

In grateful acknowledgment of his faithful service, and in keen appreciation of the great loss the association has suffered in Mr. McBurney's death, the executive committee places on its records this memorial minute.

*Resolved*, That in the death of Robert R. McBurney, we profoundly appreciate the loss to this board and to this association of one whose coöperation, sound advice, and willing self-sacrifice, through years of patient toil, wrought uniformly for the glory of God and the good of his fellowmen. His life was an example of Christian endeavor and his memory will be an inspiration for the

young men and women of this and other lands, in whose interest and welfare he forgot his own.

JOHN S. BUSSING,  
*Secretary.*

Extract from the Thirty-first Annual Report of  
the Evangelical Alliance for the United  
States of America:

Of the very special loss sustained by the Alliance in the recent death of Mr. R. R. McBurney, for so many years one of our most faithful members and most useful officers, we desire to make special record. His counsels were wise, his readiness to give personal labor was constant, and his faith in Christian coöperation as a means of advancing Christ's kingdom, was unfailing. Modest, unselfish, sympathetic, strong, he was loved and honored by all who knew him. Rarely does a single life admit of such abounding toil for the Master, or enjoy the reward of such grand results. The history of Young Men's Christian Associations in this country and throughout the world, is part of the biography of R. R. McBurney. His place in the deliberations and activities of this alliance cannot easily be filled.

L. T. CHAMBERLAIN,  
*General Secretary.*











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